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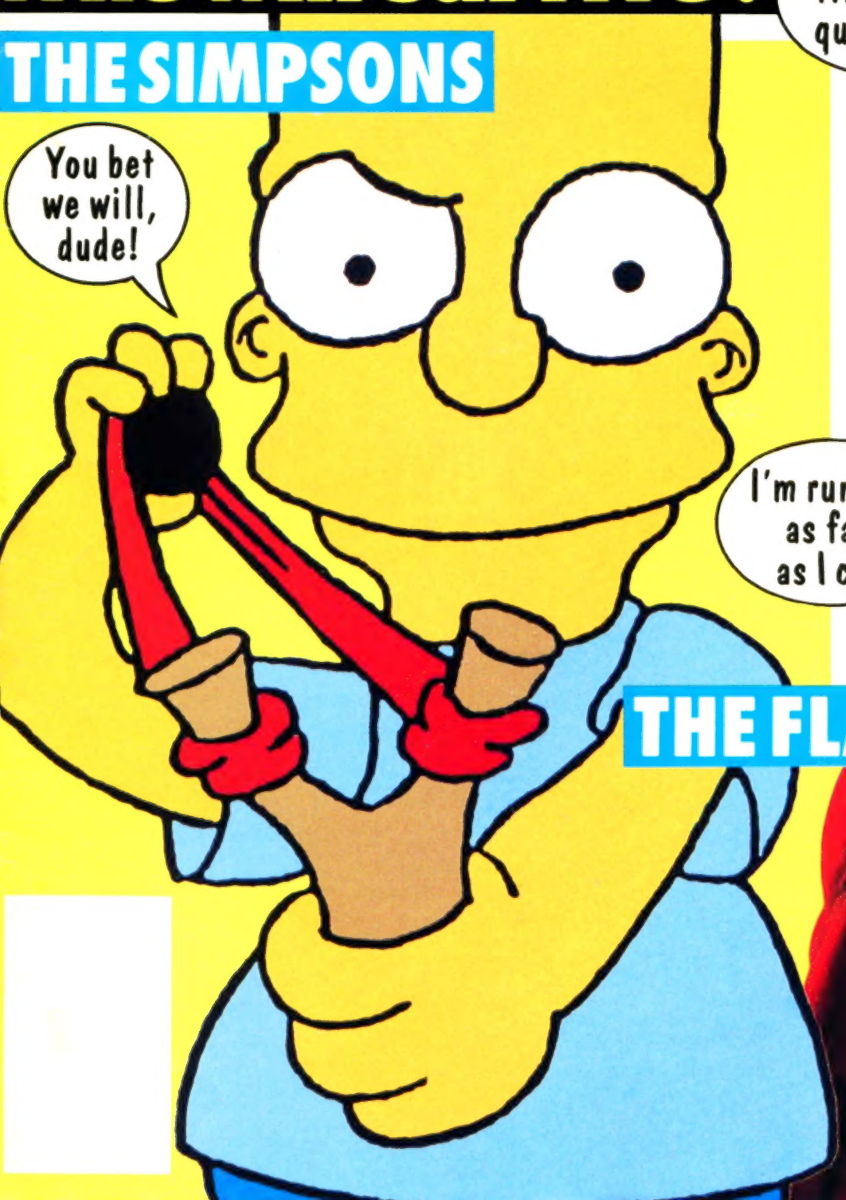

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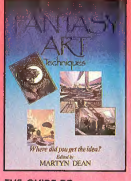

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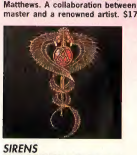

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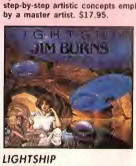

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WORD BALLOONS

True Colors

There was Spider-Man on page 9 of last issue, wearing his familiar, decades-old costume. The red and green one. Fortunately, you won't remember the green part—it was untrue color, a separation error seen *only* by COMICS SCENE's editors and designers. We fixed that and other chromatic gaffes on display in the "color key" proofs—but *not*, thankfully, retained for the finished magazine. There, the stuff got printed right.

Color is, after all, one of the major elements that sets COMICS SCENE apart from other publications about comics, enabling us to truly explore the medium's four-color aspects. But how to use this abundant color effectively? That's *always* the question.

Some features you might expect to be published wholly in color aren't—not just due to length, but because of the ready availability of color artwork. If the comic's in color but all the article illustrations we can get are in black & white, there's no reason for us to devote *color* pages to that feature.

Likewise, a b&w comic with only b&w illustrations on hand means a b&w feature. We want to present the comic's look as truthfully as possible.

That's one reason you see *Owlhoots* (page 53) on color pages. The ambitious Kitchen Sink title from James Vance and John Garcia is actually published in *sepiatone* (to reflect the Old West and the early days of moviemaking). But you can't print sepiatone on b&w pages unless you want shades of grey. We're uncertain if our color separators can perfectly "match" *Owlhoots*' sepia shade on all the illustrations chosen. Take our word for it, though—*Owlhoots* looks even better as a comic.

So, for that matter, does *Enemy Ace: War Idyll*. We published a sample of George Pratt's truly breathtaking watercolors last issue; they printed beautifully. Still, I've seen some of the originals. It was holding them in my hands at a 1988 comics con and studying their splendor that convinced me we *had* to do a story on that striking DC graphic novel. And in color!

Rick Veitch's *Bratpack* was something different. Although that title is published in b&w with lotsa grey wash, Tundra Publishing loaned us *color* photocopies. They had essentially "colorized" the b&w art by sending it through a color copier which transformed its various greys into browns. The intriguing result—as shown in CS#14—certainly makes for offbeat visuals that complement that "black" tale of kid sidekicks.

Sadly, Jan Strnad & Richard Corben's *Son of Mutant World*—also seen in CS#14—isn't in color anymore. Provided with color art and b&w photostats, we printed both. Unfortunately, flat sales on Fantagor Press' *Son*, attributed to the oversaturated comics market, caused a mutation. Although *Son*'s initial issues are in color, subsequent ones, in a move to match printing costs with revenues, are in b&w. How sad—when Corben art which exists in color must be published *without* it.

Color photos from comics-based films and TV shows offer other possibilities. Here at STARLOG PRESS, we've developed a perverse theory about them. "If," our reasoning goes, "a movie's under a certain budget and the photos are great, the movie *won't* be." This theorem, tested time and again, has frequently proven true. Why? Who knows?

Let's look back at recent issues—*Captain America* (despite the "rubber ears," great pix in CS#12; those who've seen the film are unimpressed), *Archie* (CS#14, beautiful photos filled with rich violets and light greens; surprisingly, the TV movie wasn't as dreadful as it might have been) and *Brenda Starr* (page 61). Ensnarled in legal problems, *Starr*'s American release has been delayed for years. Nevertheless, its color photos sure are nice—and that's why we devoted all those color pages to Brenda, Cap and Archie. According to theory, the movies may not be so good, but the photos are. Maybe that's not *true* color, but it's as close as we can get.

—*David McDonnell/Editor*

COMICS SCENE RETURNS in time for Christmas. Sorry, circumstances beyond our control precluded publishing a feature promised this issue. So, no more concrete guarantees here, but look for more of the prolific **Alan Grant**...answers (and **The Question**) with artist **Denys Cowan**...and surprises in **COMICS SCENE #17, on sale December 11.**

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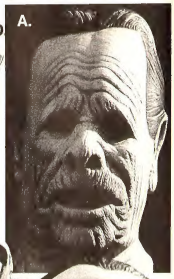

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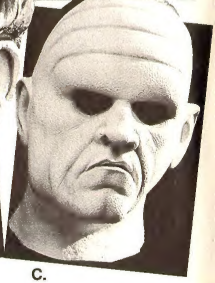

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No more Mr. Nice Guy! This Tommy Tomorrow wants to rule more than just the Planeteers.

Things to Come

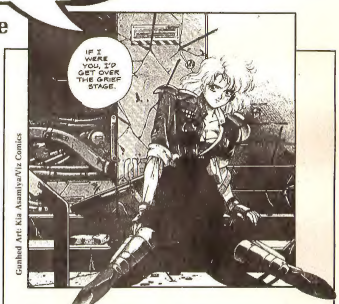
Due from DC in October is *Twilight*, a three-part prestige format series from the mind of Howard Chaykin. Featuring the art of Jose Garcia Lopez, the book brings together, according to Chaykin, "all of DC's rather dippy science fiction characters from the '50s and '60s. Tommy Tomorrow, Manhunter 2070, Space Museum, the Star Rovers and Star Hawkins, all the characters I really loved as a kid translated into a cohesive universe."

Chaykin describes the miniseries as "a story about what happens when immortality screws everything up.

"It's very much my tribute to the two great Smiths of science fiction, Cordwainer and E.E. 'Doc.' *Twilight* is very much that type of material. It's about politics and religion. It's hysterically funny and, in many ways, kind of silly."

Never known for understatement, Chaykin offers his assessment of *Twilight*'s potential for greatness: "It has astonishing visuals, brilliant ideas and a lot of cheap gags at the expense of these characters who deserve it."

—*Marc Shapiro*



Gunhed Art: Kia Asamiya/Viz Comics

Watch Your "HED"

The World Government thought it had solved its problems by dumping its deadliest robots on a single island and declaring it off-limits. But if someone could just gain control of their central computer, the world would be at his feet. Unbeknownst to the fortune hunters who are trying to do just that, this is exactly what the insane computer Kyron 5 has in mind. Writer/artist Kia Asamiya (with an English assist by James Hudnall) triggers *GUNHED*, a three-part, color miniseries from Viz Comics, in November. The Japanese film on which it's based is scheduled to hit American theaters next summer.

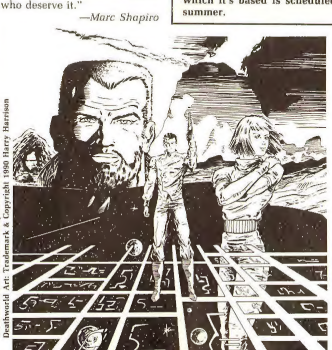
Buck in Style

Our take on *Buck Rogers* has always been that it's really a 25th century comic book and that Buck Rogers is only *one* of the characters," says TSR's Flint Dille, grandson of the original strip's syndicator and co-writer of the new full-color title. "After issue #3, it won't be just Buck anymore. Buck will have his own adventures and will make appearances in other 25th century series, but once this thing gets going, he'll be more of a semi-regular character.

"Within certain parameters, Buck will go off in as many directions as we can think of to send him. Obviously, he won't get totally out of character, but we feel there are things we can do and still keep Buck like the Buck everybody expects. The same will be pretty much the case with Wilma. Killer Kane will most likely remain totally treacherous, and Ardala will always be a space slut.

"I think this is a good '90s incarnation," explains Dille, who discusses the series in greater detail in STARLOG #161. "It's a world that's constantly changing, but at its core, it is very much the world of the original Buck Rogers."

—*Marc Shapiro*



Deathworld Art: Marcello Campos/Courtesy Adventure Comics
Deathworld Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Harry Harrison

Not Having a Wonderful Time

All right, so the gravity is twice what you're used to. So, the weather changes from one extreme to another every day. And maybe the bugs are gigantic, and *everything* is carnivorous (and hungry). But if Jason dinAlt survives, he'll have the time of his life. And starting this November, writer John Holland, artist Marcello Campos and Adventure Comics will be arranging a three-issue tour of SF author Harry Harrison's private planet for those who like exotic trips. Oh, the place *is* called *Deathworld*, but don't let that put you off.

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FLASH of TV Worlds

He isn't exactly the same speedster seen in the comics.

By MARC SHAPIRO

Veteran comic book writer/artist Howard Chaykin got up one morning not too long ago. He got into his car, went to the gym, drove to his office and sat down in front of his computer.

That's when it hit him.

"It suddenly dawned on me: Oh my God! For the first time in 15 years, I had a job!"

Along with his writing partner John Moore, Chaykin's assignment is to function as story editor of *The Flash*, TV's latest and easily most ambitious attempt to faithfully capture a time-honored comic-book character on the small screen.

At least, that's the way it's shaping up. Chaykin, while high on the project, has only the pilot and a "really good script John and I have written and will turn in next Monday" to back up his claim.

"Until we hit the air and see a couple of episodes, it's really hard to say," he concedes. "What we're attempting is a new genre for television. We're not doing *The Incredible Hulk* or the old *Batman* series. So, we're basically treading water all the way. I'll be honest with you; until I saw the pilot reel, I didn't know why, of *all* the DC characters available, they chose to do the Flash. Now, I can see why.

"The Flash is a reasonably simple, straightforward character," he says, "with an extremely accessible ability. For comics to be successfully translated to television, they have to be immediately recognizable for what they are. We're not going to attempt to jam 50 years of backstory down people's throats. The television audience *isn't* going to be interested in the fact that Jay Garrick was the original Flash."

Co-produced and written by Paul De Meo and Danny Bilson, *The Flash* came to the attention of CBS entertainment head Jeff Sagansky as the result of an earlier attempt by Bilson and De Meo to get a superheroic quartet on the air in a pilot script, *Unlimited Powers*, which featured a different Flash, Green Arrow's daughter, the unearthly Dr. Occult and the late Legionnaire Blok.

"It was a *Watchmen*-like story of a future society in which superheroes are outlawed," De Meo says. "It turned out to be a bit too much for television, so nothing happened. But when Jeff Sagansky took over at CBS, he liked the idea of developing a series for one character, and so, we decided to do the Flash."

The pilot, written by Bilson and De Meo, appears to

John Wesley Shipp is CBS' *dark* Flash.

All Flash Photos Copyright 1990 Warner Bros. TV

have been torn straight from the comic pages as if it was written and illustrated just yesterday by Gardner Fox and Carmine Infantino. Central City police chemist Barry Allen is working alone in his lab one night when a lightning bolt slams into his lab and upsets the experimental chemicals with which he has been working. The combination of the chemical bath and the lightning has a strange effect on Allen's metabolism, giving him hyper-speed.

While Allen comes to grips with his new power, a gang of motorcycle-riding terrorists, led by the psychotic Pike, plots the total destruction of Central City and its police force. When Barry's police officer brother is killed by the gang, the combination of his accident and his brother's death

Mixing continuities, the Barry Allen Flash (Shipp) will seek help from Wally West's friend, Tina McGee (Amanda Pays), in controlling his super-speed.

forces Barry Allen into action as the crime-fighting Flash.

John Wesley Shipp portrays the Flash/Barry Allen. Paula Marshall plays his long-suffering girl friend Iris, who *won't* be in every episode. *Max Headroom*'s Amanda Pays is scientist Tina McGee and noted character actor M. Emmet Walsh, seen in *Blood Simple* and *Blade Runner*, appears as Allen's father.

Heading up the technical side is David ("*V*") Stipes, whose company will make *The Flash* flash. Dave Stevens of *Rocketeer* fame designed the Flash costume, which was reworked and constructed by Robert (*Beetlejuice*) Short. Heading up the writing team are Bilson and De Meo, Chaykin and Moore along with *Alien Nation* alums Steve Mitchell and Craig Van Sickel.

The pedigree is definitely there, but any comic fan worth his thought balloons can't help but remember that the best intentions also produced *Howard the Duck*. Chaykin has a long memory when it comes to less-than-faithful treatments.

"I know, the immediate assumption is that television will take this and turn it into *Batman* 1967. There will be *some* humor in *The Flash*, but it *won't* be that insipid, stupid kind of humor that makes fun of the character. Barry Allen is an intense and troubled guy. He's *not* the Adam West version of Bruce Wayne."

Chaykin offers, on the other hand, that TV's Flash won't necessarily be a mirror image of the comic book hero.

"I've never been convinced that there was a whole lot of character in the comic book Flash. For me, the beginning and the end of the Barry Allen character was that he had a crew-cut. The character we will present will definitely reflect the more adult side of the comics.

"John Shipp, for openers, is a very hard-boiled-looking individual. You only have to look at him to realize we're *not* doing a kid's show. A very adult aspect that we will explore is that the Flash's speed is both a blessing and a curse. Barry Allen dealing with the price he has to pay for the speed will be an important element of this series.

"What we've got with this Flash is a very hard-boiled, rather dark, very sinister and very contemporary take on the Flash that reflects the ethos of contemporary comic books."

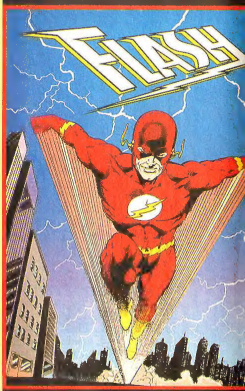
Producer Bilson echoes Chaykin's tough talk, describing this Flash as "intense and dangerous."

"Believe me," says Bilson, "when Barry gets hit by lightning, smashes into furniture and crashes unconscious to the floor, people will feel uncomfortable. And they definitely *won't* be laughing."

What longtime *Flash* followers may be studying most is how the producers have played fast and loose with the different incarnations of the comic. In the comics, as most fans know, Barry Allen was killed off years ago, and Iris, whom he eventually married, died, was resurrected and presumably vanished in the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* along with her far future home. The current Flash, Wally West, who was once Kid Flash, is the boy friend of Tina McGee.

Chaykin explains this hybrid by stating that "the show has taken the *best* of all the available material." Bilson explains the Barry Allen focus by stating, "Wally West has always been a little too obnoxious for our tastes." De Meo agrees, admitting that the TV *Flash* is the sum total of different parts.

"Essentially, we've based the show on the Barry Allen Flash in the sense



Flash Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc.

Art: Greg LaRocque & Jose Marzan Jr./Colors: Tom McGraw

Flash Costume Creation Photos: Courtesy Bob Shortt/Dan Harvey

Dave Stevens' redesign of the Flash costume was used as a guide for FX expert Bob Short to create something more menacing than a guy in tights.

Doug Turner finalizes skin on a boot-casting. Note the cowl on the right which Bob Short reworked to give the speedster a permanent scowl.

Costume Art: Dave Stevens

Don Matheson, from Short's shop, works on the latex Flash insignia.

that he's this police chemist in Central City who has this accident that gives him this power. But we've played around with some things.

"We've kept Iris in Barry's life but not as an ongoing central character. We've brought Tina back into the Barry Allen period and given her a more central role in the Flash's life. We've also taken the unpredictability of the Wally West Flash, the need to rest and eat a lot, and given them to Barry. The show is a mixture of things, but the character is based on what we consider the *classic* version of the Flash."

Casting this classic version turned out to be a major consideration. Chaykin, in a playful mood, always saw the Flash as being played "by Martin Milner," known forever for his cop role as Kent McCord's partner in the original *Adam-12*. But since Milner wasn't available, Bilson and De Meo had to take the casting process to the masses.

"We found many people who wanted to do it," relates De Meo, "but when we showed them a picture of the suit, most people didn't have the confidence to even put it on because they felt they would look silly. But, in John Wesley Shipp's case, we got real lucky. He was enthusiastic about the role and he was, physically, the type of person we were looking for."

It's difficult to see how anybody could look anything but formidable in this outfit. The Flash's costume, from its snarling cowl line to its muscles-on-muscles look, is a sculpted power suit in the tradition of last year's cinematic Batman outfit.

"The producers made it clear that they wanted a sinister tone to the costume and that it shouldn't look like a guy in tights," says Short, who built the scarlet speedster's suit. "They said they wanted something that looked like a makeup effect."

Short took this verbal blueprint and ran with it. The result is a costume that, minor modifications aside, is a dead ringer for the Flash's well-established duds. Short explains the particulars of its construction.

"We covered John with a suit of spandex and sculpted foam rubber muscles and applied them over the suit on John's real muscles. We then applied a flexible sealer of electrostatic nylon and sprayed that over the foam rubber and spandex, creating a surface coating that seals the entire outside of the costume and, when filmed, creates the impression of an odd surface texture that makes it hard to figure out exactly what the suit is made of."

Getting the Flash to move at light speed and yet be true to the way such motion is depicted in the comics was a task that sent visual FX director David Stipes back to the source for research.

"In the comics, when the Flash is moving, you have this long streak and a smear and you get to see key positions of the Flash in the middle of the streak. Those are the elements that we're imitating on this show."

This speedy look is being accomplished by shooting the Flash against a black screen. The camera is undercranked so that he appears to be moving at super-speed. The Flash speed film is then composited onto the background plate and the red streak is painted in. According to Stipes, it's all done with cameras.

"We're using longer shutter exposures rather than a lot of time lapse stuff," says Stipes. "That's what speeds things up. Then, we're going back and putting what we call video feedback on it. We run a series of frames in which we see the person start to fade out and we have a sort of trailing image."

And this Flash is going to have to be moving at hyper-speed if he's going to keep up with all the bad guys the writers are about to set loose on him. These villains, in many cases, will also be torn from the comics pages with the likes of Weather Wizard, the Trickster and the Pied Piper all awaiting their shot at the Flash. But De Meo warns that these bad guys won't play in any predictable manner. Fans shouldn't expect *Batman's* celebrity

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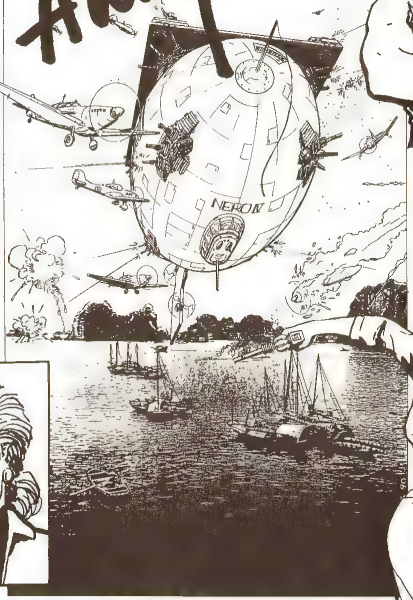
THE BOSTON BOMBERS

Bombs Away!

With Rocky Felicity (far left), Gina Wilhelm (inset left) and Copper Fela (above), Indra Devine races into action.



Art: Christopher Jones

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

Bullets screaming through the night air around them, a band of daring young women in the employ of the League of Nations race through the sordid streets of modern Hong Kong, searching for their only means of escape. Packed into the speeding cars behind them are the minions of the man they now hold captive, the most notorious white slaver in the Far East. Somewhere ahead of these adventuresses waits the *Bomber Queen*, a state-of-the-art, four-engine seaplane and their only way of reaching the League's own massive aircraft and returning home.

Yet even if they manage to take off, war clouds, already looming as large as the dirigibles that still fill the skies, may very well force them down into a conflict the likes of which their world has not seen in 70 years.

Art: Christopher Jones/Gary Kato

Meanwhile, in a far more familiar universe, a comic-book writer must contend with a six-issue mini-series that has already given him as much trouble as he provides his heroines. Set on an alternate Earth where the President of the United States is a descendant of the triumphant General Custer and his Native American paramour, the Roman Empire thrives in South Africa, and the Pope is a woman, *The Boston Bombers* may also cause problems for its creator in coming months. Even so, Ron Fortier can't help but stay devoted to it.

"It's a tribute to every pulp adventure and Saturday matinee serial that has ever been done," confesses Fortier, who discussed his work on *The Green Hornet* in CS #9. "I love those things to death. I was born in 1946; most of that was all gone, but I was around to see the last vestiges of the old cliffhangers, and once this gets into your blood, it never gets out.

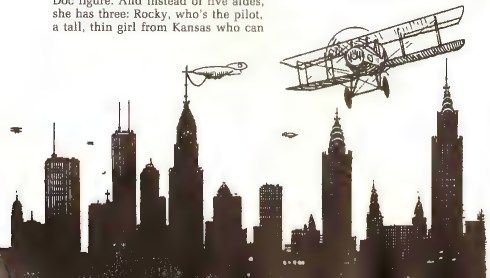
"The Boston Bombers are an independent group of agents who work primarily for two world organizations. The first and most obvious that they're associated with is the League of Nations, and the second, which is a little more in the shadows, is the Catholic Church, and that's only because Indra Devine, the leader of the Bombers, is the daughter of an Indian rajah and a female Catholic bishop, the Bishop of Boston.

"My definite model was Doc Savage and company, Indra being the Doc figure. And instead of five aides, she has three: Rocky, who's the pilot, a tall, thin girl from Kansas who can fly anything ever made; Copper, a body-building racing car driver/mechanic from Canada; and finally Gina, who is a German scientist and the Einstein of her world and era."

However, thanks to her considerable reputation and technical expertise, Gina has come to the attention of a number of senators in the Roman Forum who "see world conquest as some kind of manifest destiny for the Empire" and Gina as the key to it. And so, even as they prepare to seize power from the Emperor at home, steps have been taken to capture Gina in Germany, forcing the Bombers to battle "Roman troops, Roman agents, spies and terrorists" if they are to free the young scientist and possibly forestall what in their universe could be a second world war.

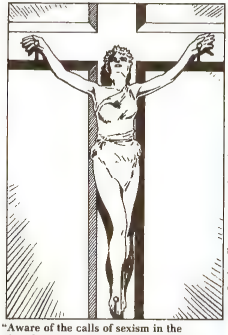
But *Boston Bombers* follows the cliffhanger pattern in more than just plot formulas. In true adventure serial fashion, even the mini-series' development has been packed with reversals, surprises and narrow escapes.

An admirer of Robin Ator's artwork on *Kira the Jungle Girl*, Fortier had several years ago begun writing to him, eager to find a project they could do together, preferably one that could best utilize Ator's ability for drawing "phenomenally beautiful women in very dramatic, action-oriented set-ups." At the same time, Fortier knew it had to reflect his own



"*Boston Bombers* is a *fun* comic," stresses Fortier. "If some of the quirky things I've slipped in stay with the readers, maybe get them angry, maybe make them reflect, there's nothing wrong with that."

"total passion and devotion to the pulps. Doing *Bombers* was very simply a case of 'OK, how can I write something that is totally Doc Savage and all the pulps I ever loved, all the Saturday afternoon cliffhangers, and still be fresh? Well, why don't I bring in some concerns that are hitting us today?' " In the end, Fortier, "a very devout member of the Church," chose to attack what he saw as sexism within the Church by creating a drastic alteration in the origins of Christianity in the Bombers' world, a change that would make such dis-



Boston Bombers Characters & Art: Copyright 1990 Ron Fortier

"Aware of the calls of sexism in the Church," Ron Fortier "set out to shake up the pot a great deal" by making the Jesus of the Bombers' world female.

crimination an impossibility there.

With the concept for *Boston Bombers* established, the team's agent, Mike Friedrich, began searching for a publisher. One independent seemed the most likely—until the company announced its intentions to publish it *before* any contracts were finalized. Three issues that were already complete languished while Friedrich spent years showing the mini-series and getting turned down by one company after another. Finally, Gary Reed of Caliber agreed to publish it. Robin Ator, though, no longer wanted to draw it.

"To this day, I haven't the slightest clue as to why he chose *not* to pursue the book," Fortier admits. "Apparently, after a couple of years, he saw comics as a not-too-normal existence. But I was never anything less than

Art: Christopher Jones

The Roman Empire takes to the skies—a commanding view of the China Sea from the dirigible *Nero IV*.

thrilled by what he produced on this series. He simply didn't want to continue it, and this is something I have to respect his wishes on."

Fortunately, an artist Fortier is convinced "is going to be one of the biggest things to hit the comics scene in years," Chris Jones, agreed to not only finish pencilling the mini-series (Gary Kato providing the inks) but, in deference to Ator's reluctance to be further associated with the project, to completely redo the first three issues as well.

"That has been the real excitement for me, since I've seen the originals," confides the writer. "Every now and then, I'll pick up pages of the Robin

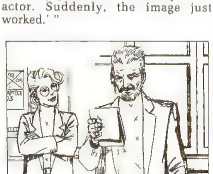
Art: Christopher Jones/Gary Kato

Ator work and compare them with what Chris is currently producing, and it's an education for me to see two very divergent artists and their approaches to one of my scripts."

Still, there was one lesson for which he wasn't quite prepared. "As you recall, there is a radical group in the Roman Forum. Well, in my scripts, I was trying to convey this Cassius image from my high school recollections of *Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare described all the conspirators who ultimately do in Caesar as being these ex-Legionnaires, husky, robust men, all except for Cassius, who was this wiry, lean guy, and that's the way I wrote the senator who leads the fanatical group.

"Robin Ator drew him pretty much like I imagined, this small, thinnish weasel type, but when I got the first batch in from Chris Jones on that particular issue, I about dropped on the floor. Not only was it a different interpretation of the character, but it was also somebody of whom I was very, very well aware. He drew Patrick Stewart! It's Jean-Luc Picard in a toga, ranting and raving. It's the *wildest* thing! I said, 'Why on Earth did you pick Picard?' And he came back with, 'All I could see was the Roman Forum and these senators having these great orations, and suddenly, it dawned on me: Stewart's this very professional Shakespearean actor. Suddenly, the image just worked.' "

The rebellious Romans launch their first attack, sending a strike team into Germany after Gina Wilhelm, their world's most brilliant scientist.



All Bombers Pencil Art: Christopher Jones

Out of his fondness for the 1930s, Fortier chose to preserve the essence of the period by eliminating that which brought about its demise: World War II. In the Bombers' history, a vastly more powerful League of Nations took strong measures to prevent Germany from ever being able to reclaim its former place in global politics. Consequently, without any of the cultural and scientific strides made because of the war, even in the 1980s, people "are driving Dusenbergs, and we've still got prop planes and airships galore.

"We should *still* have dirigibles flying, carrying cargo and whatever, and we should maybe try to get away from this lust for speed that predominates our society today," the writer comments. "If the world of Indra Devine is different, maybe that's part of how it's different. The world is still locked into a much more slow-paced, reflective era where science is still something wonderful, where people are still optimistic and enthusiastic about life, that it's still an adventure to be lived on a day-to-day basis. That's the kind of fire and energy that I'm trying to put into this series."

However, while Fortier has concentrated on resurrecting the spirit of a bygone age, some of his readers may be more concerned with the way the souls of the residents of the Bombers' reality are ministered to. For there, as the writer himself notes, "Jesus was female, which definitely changed everything from that point in history onwards. The Christian movement was much more successful in this alternate world in that the Jewish community accepted her as the Messiah, and there was a startling, dramatic revolution in the faith of these people, so much so that the Church is actually centered in Jerusalem." Although this element eliminates the sexually biased practices he finds in the real world

(continued on page 32)

By
SCOTT LOBDELL

Operatic

For P. Craig Russell, a comic isn't a

There's nothing worse than sitting in the balcony, enjoying one aria or another, while trying to make out the fat lady with the Viking horns through a pair of those tiny opera glasses.

P. Craig Russell, the comic book artist who has earned a reputation for adapting works from other mediums into the four-color world, has found a way around all the distractions and conventions of the opera house. Having grown disinterested, for the most part, in the mainstream titles offered him over the years, Russell prefers to work with the classics.

"I'm not a writer myself, except only very occasionally," says Russell, "but I can fashion a story from a script. So, if I wanted anything with any literary value that I could start with, it had to be an adaptation of an existing classic." That latest classic, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, has been transformed into a three-issue 48-page mini-series from Eclipse.

This is the same man who adapted such classics as the operas *Pelleas and Melisande* and *Salomé* for Eclipse (which have been collected into a single volume called *Opera*), Michael Moorcock's Elric adventures for Epic and First Comics, and just recently scripted and thumbnailed *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* for First's *Classics Illustrated* line. So, tackling *The Magic Flute* should be as easy as, say, falling into the orchestra pit.

"In the case of *The Magic Flute*, as opposed to *Salome*, the adaptation was more difficult," reveals Russell. "*Salomé*, with its original script by Oscar Wilde, is of such literary value that you can do it almost straight from the source. I mean, I edited it down, but it was just a beautifully written script that had to be adapted into pictures.

"*The Magic Flute* was a little bit more difficult. There were gaps in the story. There were unexplained things that had to be worked out. It needed some major reworking and refashioning." Among the most challenging aspects was the opera's climax. Considering the tale focuses on the plight of two couples' search for truth, interwoven with magic flutes, bells, dragons and secret orders, what could have proven difficult?

"Usually, the climax—'The Trial of Fire and Water'—is done onstage with flashing lights and lots of noise. We didn't have that luxury in the comic book," explains Russell, referring to himself and his sometime-collaborator, writer Patrick Mason. "So, what we had to do was work out the trial itself in what turned out to be a 20-page synopsis. We had to do it because in the opera, the villains simply say, 'We are doomed,' and that's it. There's a lot of good music, but *nothing* happens."

How does a fan favorite artist of the critically acclaimed but commercially ignored *Killraven* go from SF action heroes at Marvel to divas and dancers at Eclipse? Russell explains, "I've been very fortunate in that Eclipse has been interested in the things I want to do. I *am* a big opera fan, but the way I got into it on my own, doing *Pelleas* and *Salomé*, was the *source* material. The plays that the operas were adapted from were so well written that in a sense, I was adapting plays that happened to be operas. In *Pelleas*, the music had *no* influence on my adaptation. In

All Magic Flute & Other Opera Art: By & Copyright 1990 P. Craig Russell

In adapting *The Magic Flute*, P. Craig Russell had to come up with his own rhythm to fill in gaps in the story.

Evenings

comic until the fat lady sings.

Salomé, I was very familiar with the opera, so there were a few points where Strauss' interpretation of Oscar Wilde affected my own."

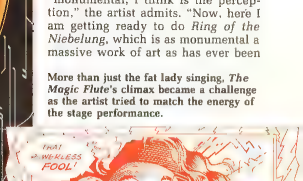
Citing a pure opera adaptation, Russell offers, "I'm going to, in the next couple of years, start on Richard Wagner's *Ring of the Niebelung* [a version of which Roy Thomas and Gil Kane recently completed for DC]. There's an example of where the composer actually wrote the script instead of having someone else provide it for him."

While all this talk of Wilde and Wagner might be exciting to enthusiasts of the classics, it does seem puzzling how Russell intends to locate his target audience. "What we have to do is approach opera people on their own terms. If we wait for them to walk into a comic book store, that's *never* going to happen." He explains that Eclipse is scouring for potential readers in such nontraditional comic markets as mainstream book fairs. "They might not be comic book fans, but if you put an opera adaptation under their nose, they might pick it up and read it."

But as for the comic book fans oriented solely towards the superhero genre, surely they'll find *something* to relate to in Russell's latest efforts? "Not necessarily," Russell confesses. "It depends on the opera. Wagner's *Ring* certainly has all the heroic gestures with the swords, dragons, dwarfs, giants and everything. Some are very low-key, and if someone's favorite character really is Wolverine, they're *not* going to like my adaptation, I would suspect. But they just might like Siegfried."

Russell is aware that operas carry a peculiar stigma about them. Whether deserved or not, most operas appear as intimidating to the average reader as *War & Peace*. Not so much sprawling as, well, "monumental, I think is the perception," the artist admits. "Now, here I am getting ready to do *Ring of the Niebelung*, which is as monumental a massive work of art as has ever been

More than just the fat lady singing, *The Magic Flute*'s climax became a challenge as the artist tried to match the energy of the stage performance.



The Queen of the Night appears, bestowing upon Tamino the Magic Flute.

and the orchestra, it would seem bigger. Opera is certainly associated with a certain grandiosity," Russell concedes.

"I'm sure I'll get opera fans angry with me at this, but it's not that important a *current* cultural phenomenon. Movies are the art form of our age. It's evident; whether it's *Back to the Future* or an Ingmar Bergman retrospective, virtually everybody goes to the movies. We all have that cultural heritage in common. You always ask someone, 'Have you seen a good movie lately?' There are very few people you can ask, 'Have you seen a good opera lately?' or, 'Have you read a good book lately?' Not that many people even read.

"So, it's not of an immense popular importance. But it *is* of an immense artistic importance. It can still carry the weight of ideas as well as any other art form."

And while his contemporaries' work on mainstream titles is being touted as instant collector's items, Russell seems perfectly content to spend most of his creative energies on projects that he hopes will stand the test of time.

"The 'instant classic' is an oxymoron. Many things are very popular immediately and have critical reaction that is mixed but loud, but may or may not last. Just like in opera," he notes with a laugh, amused at his tendency to relate nearly every subject to music history. "At the time Wagner was writing his operas, he frequently couldn't get them produced. Giacomo Meyerbeer was the rage of the opera world. Everyone went to see Meyerbeer, he was the number one composer. Now, after Meyerbeer died, nobody even thought of performing Meyerbeer for decades—they thought it was trash.

"So, instant popularity doesn't always mean that it will last. Neither does instant popularity mean that it *won't* last, because sometimes the public is immediately right. You just have to wait for the dust to settle and the decades to pass to see if a particular work is worth preserving."

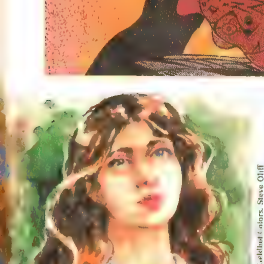
Insisting he has no hidden agenda, no desire to turn comic book readers into opera fans, Russell is decidedly nonchalant. "If they want to go see it, fine. I'm not looking for converts. That is why—and next year, I'll probably eat my words—I've never gone for a specific message in my stories. I think there's an inherent message in the way an artist does something or what he considers in the world that he creates, but I try not to tackle morals and sermons: 'This is the message of the day,' or, 'We're going to save the world.' I distrust that in any form of art when it's just grafted on. 'If you're going to be entertained, here's the pill you have to take with it,' which is what you get in many preachy TV shows.

"I couldn't be *less* interested in educating people. I want the things I do to have real literary value and worth, artistic worth. I'm not talking about entertainment for the lowest common denominator, but I distrust that that must mean to educate people. Education should be for the classroom and not the arts."

Prince Tamino and Pamina are caught in the struggle between the Queen of the Night and King Sarastro.

Ironically, there stands a chance his latest work might wind up in the classroom. Russell has recently collaborated with artists Jill Thompson and Jay Geldhof to bring to life, respectively, Nathaniel

"In *Salomé*, I was very familiar with the opera, so there were a few points where Strauss' interpretation of Oscar Wilde affected my own," says Russell.



If nothing else, notes Russell, *Classics Illustrated*, like *The Scarlet Letter* (with layouts by Russell and art by Jill Thompson), permits comics readers to "share in the cultural pool of literacy."

Usher Layouts, P. Craig Russell/Art: Jay Geldhof/colors, Steve Oliff

The short length of Poe's "House of Usher" allowed Russell and artist Jay Geldhof to "let the book's graphic elements breathe."

Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." Offering his services to the two artists, Russell's participation in each of the projects was limited to scripting and rendering thumbnails of the story. He made room from his scripting-artist chores on other projects because, he confides, he has always had an affinity for America's most twisted author.

"I've always wanted to do a Poe story, and this was a chance to at least work on one without having to work months and months to see it through to the very end. I also like the idea of simply writing the script and seeing what another artist would do with it. I did the thumbnails, but when Jay and Jill got down to doing the artwork, they had some of their own ideas on layout.

"Poe lent itself well to the adaptation because 'House of Usher' was an 18-19 page story. And we had 44 pages in which to do it. So, I could put in as much of the script as I wanted yet let the book's graphic elements breathe."

Others may contest whether the *Classics Illustrated* line has anything to offer potential readers, feeling that it sullies the merits of the original classics. Russell dismisses such criticism. "The work of art remains—the book remains, and *anyone* who wants to read it is going to read it. Anyone who isn't interested in the book isn't going to be put off by the comic. If nothing else—say, if you read an adaptation of *Great Expectations* in a comic book—you'll have gained, through just an awareness of the characters and their names and events, a share in the cultural pool of literacy. So, if someone else mentions Miss Haversham, you at least know the type of person they're talking about, and in this way, you share in a common heritage.

"Maybe not in all its richness," he concedes, "but how much do any of us know about the pantheon of Roman gods? We know that if someone mentions Mars, he's the god of war. We don't have to know the family tree of *all* the deities. We do share in some of the high points so we at least know what people are talking about. It's a start.

"But it's more than that," Russell adds, citing the advantage the current crop of *Classics Illustrated* has over its earlier incarnation is "the artists bring to bear on the story a graphic awareness of the medium itself. Whereas the old ones were just illustrated adaptations that lacked any blood or sinew. Not that all the ones that are being done now are that successful. If you accept the idea that a book or a play can be adapted into another medium, whether it's film or comics, then it can be as good or bad as the artist doing the adaptation. But they work *as* comic art, they have a stature of their own, apart from the source material.

"That's what I'm concerned with when I do an adaptation, whether it's of a short story, a play or an opera. When I do an adaptation, I can't re-create the opera, we don't have music. I can't re-create the play, we don't have living actors. So, what I have to

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ONE MAN'S PSYCHOSIS

In the violent world of Alan Grant, one usually walks alone.

Part One

By PHILIP NUTMAN

Alan Grant, it seems, is everywhere these days. Between Marvel and DC, there are at least five titles a month carrying his writer credit and several others in England bearing his name, either solo or in collaboration with Judge Dredd creator John Wagner. And that doesn't include all the projects he has in the pipeline.

At DC, Grant is scripting the new Demon *series, has just left* Detective Comics *to pen the monthly* Batman, *is co-scripting* L.E.G.I.O.N. *'90 with artist Barry Kitson on an ongoing basis, and has co-written the four-part* Lobo *mini-series with Keith Giffen. Additionally, he has rewritten the first Batman story for a forthcoming 80-page special anniversary issue of* Detective Comics.

For Marvel, Grant has been the man behind the RoboCop *series. He also adapted Frank Miller's* RoboCop 2 *screenplay. At Epic, he's working on a top-secret limited series he refers to as "the Japanese project," and after years of delay,* The Last American *will appear in a revised form.*

At Fleetway, the British home of Judge Dredd, there is an upcoming 12-part Judge Anderson series, (which will eventually appear as a graphic novel), a second Judge Anderson epic that runs to 18 parts, and a 12-part Durham Red saga following the adventures of the female bounty hunter who appears in Johnny Alpha/Strontium Dog. *At the British independent, Trident, there's a new project called* Apocalypse, *on which Grant will be working alongside Pat Mills, John Wagner, Kevin O'Neill and other top talents.*

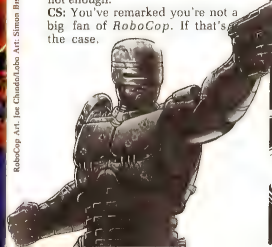
And finally, there is the long awaited Batman-Judge Dredd *team-up, written with John Wagner, which is due to appear next year. "Batman ends up in Mega City One, where he meets Dredd and Anderson," Grant reveals, "and Judge Death gets involved with the Scarecrow. The fate of two cities hangs in the balance."*

After nearly 10 years establishing himself via his work on Fleetway's 2000 A.D., *perhaps it's not surprising to find Alan Grant's talents as a writer now much in demand, even if he himself seems rather bemused by the sheer volume of work. The way the situation is heading, it looks like he'll be in even greater demand in the coming years. "The more material I have out there, the more offers I get. It's quite amazing." But for the moment, Alan Grant doesn't even have time to leave his house in Essex, several miles outside London. In fact, the only way he could fit this interview into his hectic schedule was by speaking over the phone at different times during a two-week period. So, cup of tea in hand, the man who is one of the busiest writers in comics fills in the details.*

COMICS SCENE: How did you end up writing so many titles at once?

ALAN GRANT: Fortuitous timing, I suppose. When I left Fleetway to go freelance a couple of years back, I wrote up several proposals and sent them out. Normally, you don't expect *everything* you send in to editors to get accepted, but just about everything I wrote *was* picked up. You send a proposal out and you don't hear anything for months. Then one day, the phone rings and DC says they want to do *The Demon*, so you start working on that. Then the next week, Marvel calls up and asks you to do *RoboCop*. Being freelance, you don't turn the work down. But I found myself in the position where suddenly everyone was ringing me up to ask me to do something. Everything seemed to come to fruition at the same time. However, better too much work than not enough.

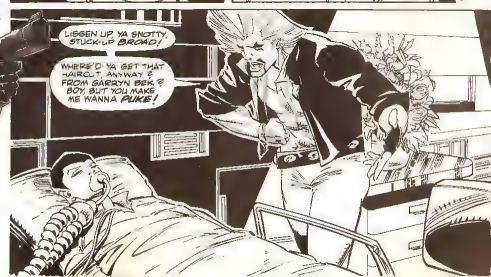
CS: You've remarked you're not a big fan of *RoboCop*. If that's the case.



RoboCop Art: Joe Chiodo/Lobo Art: Simon Bisley/Batman & Demon Art: Norm Breyfogle

Art: Lee Sullivan

Art: Jim Fern/Jeff Albrecht



All Batman, Lobo, LEGION... Batman Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc.

Art: Norm Breyfogle

Gasp! Robin returns in *Batman* #457 in a new costume "decided" by the fans.

why did you say yes to the title?

GRANT: I had done a couple of fill-in issues at Marvel, a *Silver Surfer* story and a *Nick Fury* tale, and they kept asking me if I would be interested in doing some other work for them, but I never really had time to sit down and think about it. Then, editor Gregory Wright called up to ask if I could submit a proposal for *RoboCop*. At the time, it was the *only* regular work they were offering, and as I wanted another string to my bow, I decided to do it. I didn't want to get typecast as a DC writer, although I don't want anyone to take that the wrong way and think I'm unhappy with them. I'm not, it was just that I wanted to work for Marvel and *RoboCop* was what they offered me. Being freelance, it's good to have a footing in as many camps as possible.

Anyway, I did the proposal and I didn't think I would hear any more about it because I felt the proposal was very Judge Dreddian, but *RoboCop* is very much like *Judge Dredd* anyway. Well, they liked it. What they said was, originally it was my stuff in *Detective Comics* that they liked and they wanted me to write it that way. But after a while, they said, "This may be your style but it's not *our* style. Can you rewrite this?" The way I saw the character was *not* the Marvel way.

CS: It seems to be a difficult title to write because the character's a movie figure, not an established comic character, and part of the success or failure of a tie-in title is whether or not you can reach the movie audience.

GRANT: Right. *RoboCop*'s an odd one in that respect. The movie audience is primarily adult because it's an R-rated film because of the violence. On one level, the comic would have to be ultraviolent, which I wouldn't mind writing. But that's not acceptable to Orion Pictures, who own the character, because RoboCop is now a successful cartoon character with a younger audience. It's a bit like *Batman*: You want to keep the older readers, but at the same time, you can't write anything that's going to offend the parents of young kids who read the comic. And the *RoboCop* comic seems to be very popular with younger kids. My nephew, for example, is 11, and RoboCop is one of his favorite characters. He and his friends are big fans.

CS: But you're not?

GRANT: I enjoyed the first movie and I had great fun adapting Frank Miller's screenplay for the sequel, which I think was wonderful. But the RoboCop I've had to write for Marvel is *not* really the character from the movie. The problem I've had is I can't

Art: Simon Bisley

find the heart and soul of RoboCop, don't really know who he is. There's only so much you can do.

CS: But you point out he's very much like Judge Dredd, a character you've written many times.

GRANT: Yes, but I can't understand RoboCop's motivation beyond the most basic elements. Judge Dredd is very easy to understand, he has been brainwashed into upholding the law and has very little conscience. Basically, he's the upholder of a Right Wing regime. What is RoboCop? He's a human brain stuck inside the body of a machine. I would have been happier if I could have worked with my proposal, in which I wanted us to sit in on the conscious dialogue between the human brain and the computer brain, but unfortunately, Marvel was planning the revival of *Deathlok* and they were going to use the same device, the same caption layout, so I had to abandon that idea. If I had been able to do that, I feel I would have got more depth to the character. I have a problem believing in a two-ton robot.

CS: So, what did you do to try and keep your interest?

GRANT: When I found out it was my nephew's favorite comic, it made quite a difference. That was the realization which helped me get a perspective on the title; I'm writing it for 11-year-olds, 12-year-olds. The comic doesn't seem to appeal to readers above age 15. It works for the kids who are too young to go see the movie. I don't usually write comics specifically for fans, I write them for my own enjoyment, but once I knew who the audience was, I found I could have more fun with it. But I'm leaving the title with issue #10.

CS: Why? Have you taken it as far as you feel you can?

GRANT: It's a combination of things. Yes, there's a certain limit to what you can do with the title, but my main decision was based on the time factor. Trident just called to say that the *Apocalypse* project is now going ahead and I very much want to be involved with that. To do so, I was going to have to drop a title and *RoboCop* was on the bottom of my priorities. When I told Greg Wright, he then informed me he was going to leave the series as editor with issue #10, so we decided to quit together.

CS: Most of the characters you write seem to be quite grim. Where does *L.E.G.I.O.N. '90* fit into this? It's a lightweight book.

GRANT: *L.E.G.I.O.N.* is a nice departure for me. Actually, it's one of the few occasions when I get to work with someone else, because Barry Kitson and I live quite near to each other and we keep in constant contact via the phone. We're friends as well as colleagues so it's nice to have some social contact as well. I look forward to the one day every couple of months when we get together to plot out the next few issues.

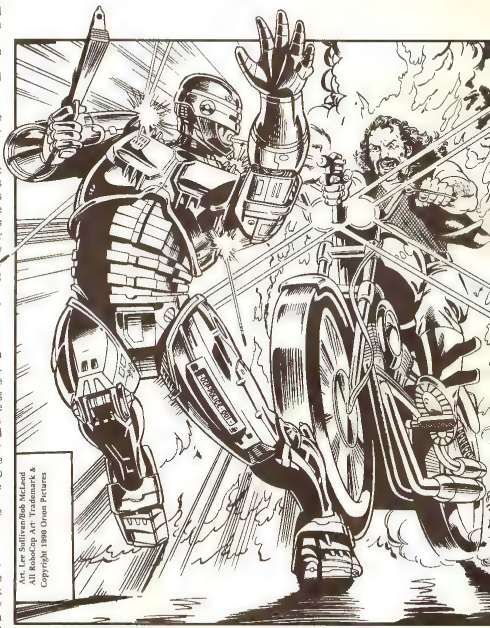
When I was young, I would read, say, *Legion of Super-Heroes* comics. I didn't really like them. I *hated* characters like Chameleon Boy. That stuff never worked for me. I have to be honest, and DC knows this, but the only reason I took on *L.E.G.I.O.N.* in the first place was because it was the *first* book anybody offered me after I left Fleetway to go freelance, so I couldn't really turn it down. Having said that, working with Keith Giffen on the first 12 issues, I found I really liked his work. He's a great storyteller. The series has grown on me and I'm very fond of some of the characters.

CS: You don't have a reputation as a "team" writer.

GRANT: Right. Most of the characters I've written operate solo—Batman, Judge Dredd, RoboCop—and I understand them better than teams of characters. I have a lot of respect for writers like Keith who can throw 30 characters into a plot. This is the first team book I've handled and I've found I really enjoy it. The team's internal dynamics make it more interesting than the actual story. It has been a good learning process.

CS: What's planned for the series?

GRANT: I can't go into detail but around the end of the second year, issue #24, we're going to kill off a major character—"kill off" in the literal sense. He or she *won't* be coming back. Usually in comics, characters are killed off, then revived at a later



Art: Lee Sullivan/Bob McLeod
Ad design: Peter Bridges
Copyright 1990 Orion Pictures

"This might sound awful, but I like violence, well, call it action," admits Grant who ends his relationship with Robo (in issue#10) and renews one with Lobo (opposite).

"A MAN IN A MASK!"
LOOKS LIKE LIEUTENANT KOSH SHOULD HAVE PAID HER A LITTLE MORE ATTENTION!
I COULD GO IN NOW--TRY TO SWEET-HER BACK.
"I Sang to the Tune of Hello Dolly"

Art: Norm Breyfogle

Art: Val Semeiks/Bruce Rediker

The Demon **was one proposal that Grant didn't expect to end up fulfilling.**

date. This won't happen. We thought, "Let's kill a major character for the sake of realism. Let's do something *dramatic.*"

CS: How did you feel about this?

GRANT: Sad. I had grown to like the character. *L.E.G.I.O.N.* can be a very violent comic. This might sound awful, but I like violence, well, call it action. And in a violent story, someone will die. I like action movies, car chases, gun fights, Jackie Chan karate movies, that kind of thing. That's what I watch for relaxation. And I like the same kind of stuff in comics. We've had some major action in the book and some of the characters have been badly hurt, but they've regenerated via alien healing powers or advanced technology. But we thought it would make sense if one of them died.

CS: What else is happening?

GRANT: We're bringing in some new characters. There's Lady Quark. And by the time this interview's published, everybody will know about Captain Comet. Originally, we were going to bring in Adam Strange as a new member of the team and I wrote three issues with him in, then it turned out DC was doing the Richard Bruning Adam Strange prestige format book [CS #12] and we couldn't use him because they were redefining the character. So, we had to find a new space type character who would fit in and Art Young, the editor, came up with Captain Comet. Everybody thought it was going to be Adam Strange.

CS: How did the *Lobo* mini-series come about? There has been a steady buzz building about it over the last few months.

GRANT: DC is apparently promoting it as their big mini-series of this year. Artist Simon Bisley, who's probably best known for his work on *2000 A.D.*'s *Slaine* has done some fine work. He has really captured the character's psychosis.

CS: What's the plot?

GRANT: Dox has sent Lobo as an officer of L.E.G.I.O.N. to pick up and escort a prisoner alive. When he gets to the prison, Lobo discovers it's the *one* person he most wants to kill—his old grade school teacher. She's a criminal charged with a number of frauds. One of these is having written the unauthorized biography of Lobo. Throughout the four issues, we switch from comics storytelling to text extracts from the biography so we get an insight into Lobo's character. Being a man of his word, Lobo decides to bring her in. Unfortunately, she's being hunted down by the League of Paramilitary Grannies for Decency.

"I find it easier to write Batman than *any* other figure, probably because I like him so much," says Grant.

Lobo has fallen afoul of a corrupt police state and has killed their leader, so they're after him. He has also destroyed a space truck stop and has a bunch of truckers chasing him. To complicate matters, there's also a gang of space Hell's Angels who have modeled themselves on Lobo, so they're on his side. And there are other people out for his blood, too. Someone asked me to describe the plot and I likened it to the movie *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World.* You have all these groups of characters rushing around after the same thing, with lots of mayhem. It's a romp through one man's psychosis.

CS: What's planned for Batman?

GRANT: By the time this interview comes out, we'll be near the conclusion of the three-part "Identity Crisis" storyline that runs through issues #455-#457 and the readers will know it's the Scarecrow who's behind the wave of mass murders plaguing Gotham City at Christmas time. Tim Drake, meanwhile, is holed up in Wayne Manor and Batman's last words to him are that if he disobeys any of his orders, Tim will never become the new Robin. Although Tim discovers via the computer that it's the Scarecrow causing the murders and that Batman's in danger, there's nothing he can do to help. The third issue wraps up the story and we get an insight into Batman's psyche as the Scarecrow tortures him with various nerve toxins.

To the best of my knowledge, DC is planning a stunt to introduce the new Robin and they're giving the readers the chance to choose his new costume from a range of designs by various artists. The last page is Tim wearing the new costume.

Issue #458 features Sarah Essen, the police woman with whom Jim Gordon had an affair in Frank Miller's *Year One*, and she's going to become a major character within the ongoing continuity. At the same time, Batman is going to acquire an assistant along the lines of a weapons master, an advisor rather than a fighting partner.

As for issue #459, I don't know who the villain is going to be yet, other than cholesterol, because Commissioner Gordon is going to have a heart attack. I shouldn't think it'll be fatal, but I don't know yet (*Wry chuckle*). Beyond that, Catwoman is going to reappear.

NEXT ISSUE: The Batman/Judge Dredd *team-up,* The Last American, The Demon *and more!*

FINE TOONING

After battling Bart Simpson, Kent Butterworth helps raise Bugs Bunny's heirs.

By BOB MILLER

Getting Bart Simpson to follow directions isn't easy.

The Simpsons is not really a cartoon. It's a situation comedy that happens to be animated."

So says Kent Butterworth, who directed several episodes of the popular series. The producers take an unusual approach to the show, he explains, by treating it as *live-action.*

"It's kind of interesting, because you animate a scene more than once," he says. "You animate it once in a long shot with all three of them, and you animate it all over again just on Homer, and they cut it as if it was live-action.

"Basically, they think about it as if it were a three-camera sitcom. We've got one camera here getting the master shot, then we've got another camera here following Homer and another one getting the close-up on Marge; they want to be able to cut back and forth independently." But, he adds, animation doesn't normally work that way. Due to its expensive nature, animated scenes are normally "pre-cut" before they're shot.

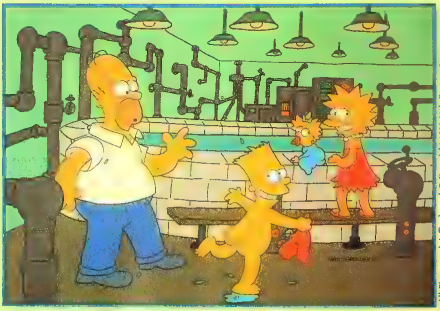
So, what's it like to direct Bart Simpson?

"Well, Bart Simpson does what he wants to do," Butterworth chuckles. "He has a mind of his own.

"I think what makes him so popular is that every kid in the world (every boy in the world, anyway) wishes he was Bart Simpson. And every grown-up man in the world imagines that he was like Bart Simpson when he was a kid. Matt

"*The Simpsons* is really a situation comedy that happens to be animated," notes Butterworth.

MATT GROENING



All Simpsons Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 20th Century Fox.

Maurice Noble, who teamed earlier with Chuck Jones to unleash "Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2 Century," joined Butterworth for the sequel, "Pluck Dodgers."

Groening tapped into something that seems to be universal. There's something about those characters that everybody identifies with."

Before Bart Simpson, Kent Butterworth made his mark in the animation industry by directing *The Incredible Hulk* and *Mighty Mouse*, supervising *Dungeons & Dragons*, starting off *G.I. Joe* on their missions, story-editing *Robotech II: The Sentinels*, and animating *The Butter Battle Book* for Dr. Seuss. Lately, he has been directing *Tiny Toon Adventures* for Steven Spielberg.

Not bad for a history major.

"I went to Rutgers University, where at the time, I wanted to be a high school teacher," Butterworth says. "But I always loved cartoons. I spent most of the time in class drawing pictures of the teacher on the borders of my test papers."

Butterworth moved to California and got a summer job doing caricatures at Universal Studios while attending college. This led him into the animation industry, and after he graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, he became an in-betweener (an artist who supplies the drawings in between key poses) for Hanna-Barbera. Then, he moved to Filmation to draw layouts for *Fabulous Funnies*. The next year, he animated *Mighty Mouse*, which, eight years later, he would direct for Ralph Bakshi.

"The following year was *Tom and Jerry*, and at that point, they bumped me up to director," Butterworth recalls. "Then, Filmation had a bad year, and so, I went to work for Marvel. I went overseas to South Korea on *The Incredible Hulk*. I was 28, and now I had a whole team of 50 artists who were supposed to do what I told them to do. That was the really exciting part. It was the first chance I really had to boss a bunch of people around. At Filmation, they had a pretty rigid system. They let you direct, but you still had to work within the system. On *The Hulk*, I had a lot more leeway. If I wanted to try something, I could."

In 1982, Marvel sent Butterworth to Japan to oversee production on *Dungeons & Dragons*, which was subcontracted to Toei Studios. Marvel supplied the models and storyboards, while the Japanese did the layouts, backgrounds and animation.

"I learned a lot about how they organize their studios," Butterworth says. "They have a well-structured production procedure with supports and checks and balances along the way to make sure everything gets done, and gets done well. I've tried to incorporate many of those ideas into the way *I* work, even into the way we were setting up the system later at Bakshi's.

"The thing about Japanese animation is that technically, it's incredibly precise. But what they *don't* do is character animation, which tends toward formula. They have basic expressions that the character will go into: They have the big teeth expression, the serious expression and the embarrassed expression.

"But as far as real *character* animation acting—the kind of thing done by Warner Bros. and Disney—it doesn't exist, because it's a different theory of animation."

Still, Butterworth says, "Their layouts are really dynamic. Their color sense is excellent. Their background rendering techniques are superb. And they do great explosions, which is great for *G.I. Joe*."

For the Joes' first mini-series, the animator prepared storyboards and exposure sheets in the States, then returned to Japan to produce it.

"On *G.I. Joe*, my whole philosophy was: If in doubt, blow it up. You're

trying to figure out this scene, and if this building's in the way and we have to show something, we blow the building up. Then, we can continue the action. You could blow *anything* up in that show and it would work."

After 13 months in Japan, Butterworth returned to the States to freelance on commercials and cartoons as diverse as *Smurfs* and *Transformers*. Producer Carl Macek initially hired Butterworth to storyboard *Robotech II: The Sentinels*, then arranged for him to story-edit the 65-episode series.

Each week, Butterworth and Macek would discuss the series with a group of five writers and hand out the assignments. These writers included John Shirley, Arthur Byron Cover, Steve Roberts, Duane Capizzi, Richard Mueller and Butterworth.

"Of course, *none* of these writers would talk to each other while they were writing," he notes. "They would just do their script and bring it back and then there would always be a million plot threads that had to be woven together. So, most of the time I worked on *Robotech* was spent weaving plot threads from one episode to the other."

Because it was a soap opera, the writers referred to *Robotech II: The Sentinels* as "*Dallas* in outer space." But distribution problems occurred, and the dollar weakened against the yen, increasing production costs. By the time the 65 episodes had been written, Harmony Gold stopped the production. Butterworth, who was to direct the new episodes, found himself freelancing again.

Then, Ralph Bakshi offered him a project which he eagerly accepted: *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*.

Mighty Mouse gave Butterworth the power to attack Saturday morning cartoon absurdity.

Art: Kent Butterworth/Copyright 1990 Viacom/CBS

Photo & Selected Art: Courtesy Kent Butterworth

Kent Butterworth admits that cartooning is easy, comedy is hard. Currently, he and Walt Kubiak are pitching *The Neighborsaurs*, the last of their kind, who move to the suburbs and try to fit in.

Neighborsaurs Art & Characters: Copyright 1990 Kent Butterworth & Walt Kubiak

Butterworth describes Bakshi as "probably one of the most charismatic people in the entire industry. He's like a magnet for talent. He won't settle for second best. If you're not giving 110 percent of your capacity, then he'll tear you apart. Now, I can see where many people wouldn't be able to handle that, but I thought it was great. His technique is to force you to give him your best ideas, and then he'll put them onto the screen."

Bakshi reunited some of the artists from Filmation's version of *Mighty Mouse*, including Butterworth, Tom Minton, Eddie Fitzgerald and John Kricfalusi. According to Butterworth, Bakshi gave them the creative freedom "to get revenge."

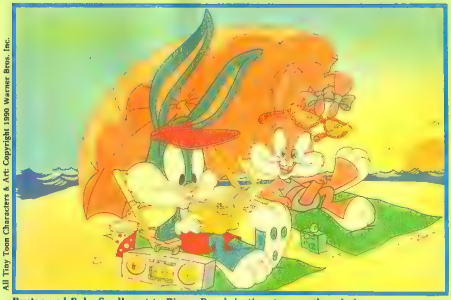
"Filmation's *Mighty Mouse* didn't add anything to the character. And the old Mighty Mouse of the '40s was kind of a flat character. It was a take-off on Superman. When we did *Mighty Mouse* with Bakshi, we tried to update him. We weren't trying to live up to any reputation, because the old Terrytoons were the cheesiest cartoons of the 1940s. If I was doing Bugs Bunny, that would be a different story. But with Mighty Mouse, we could do anything we wanted. So, we turned him into a cartoon character in his own right. We gave him a personality that evolved through the series.

"We actually had a director's unit," Butterworth says. "I had a crew of guys: a designer, a background person, a half-dozen pose artists, and we would go through the whole show and pose it out. Every important pose, any pose that's going to be on the screen more than six frames, there was a drawing in there appropriate to the dialogue. So, there was real control.

"The difference between *Mighty Mouse* and the other shows is that the old way of doing animation was to send the storyboard overseas; they do the animation from there. The problem with that is that you have no control, because the actual drawings that you're going to see on the screen are being drawn in a foreign country.

"But on *Mighty Mouse* and *Tiny Toons*, we did key pose layouts for *every* scene. Sometimes we would have 40 drawings from one scene, almost animated. All they would have to do overseas is in-between it."

The animator points out that "the networks looked at *Mighty Mouse* and



All Tiny Toon Characters & Art: Copyright 1990 Warner Bros. Inc.

Buster and Babs finally get to Pismo Beach in time to save the whales.

said, 'Well, you guys are putting more animation into this than most Saturday morning shows.' And we were saying, 'Yes, that's right, we really are.' But in actuality, there were fewer—or at least the same number of—animation cels in *Mighty Mouse* than in any other cartoon. The drawings that we drew *meant* something. They showed what that character was thinking or what he was doing. And it gave the *illusion* that there was more animation, when actually there was the same amount."

Under the unit system, Bakshi allowed the animation directors to direct the voice actors. The animators would then listen to the soundtrack and draw poses according to the performances.

"All these things shouldn't be revolutionary, but under the circumstances, they were," Butterworth states. "The unit system basically died when theatrical cartoons died, when TV animation came into being. Instead of a unit system, you had an assembly-line system, when the cartoon moved from department to department, and there would be no director overseeing the cartoon through the entire production."

Butterworth credits Bakshi for having the "nerve" to use the unit system, because it was the same way he made cartoons at Terrytoons. Butterworth would later establish this system on *The Simpsons*, where it is used to this day.

Mighty Mouse lasted two years on CBS, earning critical acclaim. Among the first season episodes Butterworth directed were "The Bagmouse," a a McDonald's parody; "See You in the Funny Papers," which used Ben Day dots to achieve a comic-strip look; and "Pirates with Dirty Faces," a "cheesy musical."

He also directed the highlight of the second season, "Don't Touch That Dial!", inspired by Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.* In it, Mighty Mouse becomes trapped in other Saturday morning cartoons, meeting "The Jetstones," "Mr. E," "Rocky and Hoodwinkle" and "The Real Gagbusters."

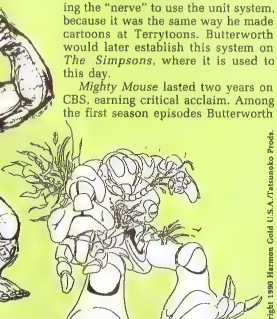
"The original concept came from Jim Reardon," Butterworth recalls. "It was a cartoon he wanted to make where we made fun of everything else on Saturday morning. That was a chance to get out of my system all of the frustration that I had at other studios. Every Saturday morning animation studio has their own particular style of doing bad animation—such as the way DIC does big downshots for no reason; the way Hanna-Barbera has these repeat pans where you walk past the same doorway or couch a million times.

"We had a couple of gag sessions, and came up with more material that we could put into the cartoon, then narrowed it down to the best gags, just put them end to end and there was our cartoon."

Butterworth derived his inspiration for the Hulk's animated show from Jack Kirby's style.

Hulk Art: Copyright 1990 Marvel Productions, Inc.

According to Butterworth, there are 65 finished scripts sitting at Harmony Gold for the unproduced *Robotech II: The Sentinels*.



Sentinels Art: Copyright 1990 Harmony Gold U.S.A./Tatsunoko Prods.

After *Mighty Mouse*, Butterworth worked on several specials for Bakshi: *Tattertown*, a Christmas special/series pilot about a land where lost toys end up; and *The Butter Battle Book*, which Dr. Seuss calls the truest translation of any of his books to film.

"What we did was take his book, shoot it down and that was our storyboard," Butterworth says. "Then, we invented other shots to bridge from one master shot to the next. And it worked really well. In fact, we left a lot of white on the backgrounds, just white paper, the way it looks like in a Dr. Seuss book. So, we used that as a graphic style, and took what could have been a weakness and turned it into a strength."

The animator was excited to work with Dr. Seuss, whom he considers "one of the great geniuses alive today." The special also marked the first time Butterworth worked with Maurice Noble, designer of many Chuck Jones cartoons, including "Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2 Century."

During the making of *Butter Battle*, Butterworth attended an animation festival where he met producer Gabor Csupo, whose studio, Klasky/Csupo, had been making one-minute

(continued on page 65)

NEW WORLDS OF WONDER!

FANGORIA

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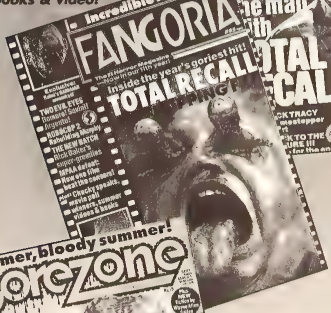

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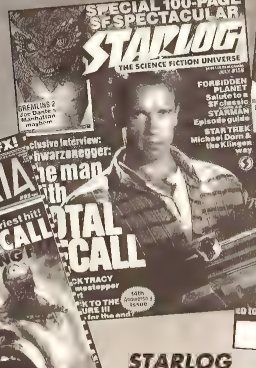

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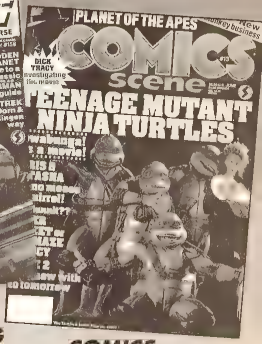

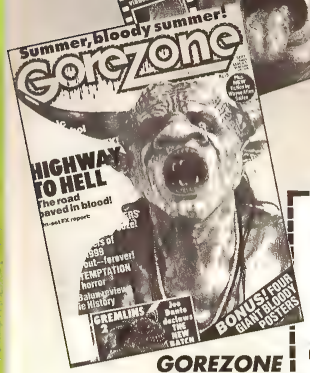

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...*Dick Tracy* was overrated, too hyped up and downright disastrous. I saw all the hype in stores and figured they're doing this because it wasn't so good, but I went to see the movie despite that. I wanted it to be good! The cardboard-looking, fake sets were deliberately bad, weren't they? That's fine, but the acting, save for Al Pacino, William Forsythe and the rest of the bad guys, was lousy.

Could it be that Warren Beatty can't star and direct in movies anymore? Compared to Beatty, Madonna seemed like a fair actress in this movie. The worst thing was all the parallels to old movies. Bogart ones mostly. The theme music was ripped off from an excellent movie called *Batman*. Then, the ending was ripped off from *Batman*. What is going on here? Has the movie industry fallen a little since the bomb of *Star Trek V*? Haven't they learned not to let director and actor mix? Can they mix? I can be proven wrong about this, can't I?

Adam M. Browne
Milpitas, CA

...Warren Beatty said that *Dick Tracy* was a joke. I went into the movie theater expecting his joke and came out happily enjoying his poke at the old gangster movies. The tried-and-true clichés were there, and the people at Disney did the right thing in making the movie one of the best subdued comedies of the year.

Maybe some folks were expecting *Dick Tracy* to be similar to the tough-as-nails *Batman* with the main character more forceful, the villains more grittier, and the ladies seductively beautiful. The film would no longer be *Dick Tracy* but a new colorful version of *Mike Hammer*. Chester Gould's original characterizations of his mob and cops would be lost to the Dark Knight vision that fans have come to expect out of a movie fashioned after comic characters. *Tracy* was not meant to compete with last year's success of *Batman* by using the same tactics. In *Batman*, we were given a darker aspect of life while in *Tracy*, there was a world of a brighter hope which was characteristic of the Disney philosophy. We must remember that Disney (a.k.a. Touchstone) are the folks who backed the film, and Tim Burton's touch of the dark world would *not* be found in this movie.

So what if the plot was weak? The film worked! This movie was pure entertainment, and had no deep probing into the psyche of the central characters. Children who never were exposed to the *Tracy* characters are becoming interested for the first time, and parents can feel some relative safety at letting their small ones see this movie. If I was a parent and given the opportunity to let my child view either *Batman* or *Dick Tracy*, *Dick Tracy* would be my first choice because the movie's aim was more direct to the children's audience and paid little attention to the adults.

Elizabeth A. Allen
Spencer, NC

...Well, I'm finally writing to your magazine, and by almost all accounts, you deserve it! Issue #14 was excellent.

I greatly enjoyed Will Murray's interview with Joe Simon & Jack Kirby. It was one of the best written in this issue. I also enjoyed Tom Weaver's article on Mark Ellis and Paul Davis and their work on a *Wild Wild West* comic adaptation. This was one of the best genre shows in the '60s, and I look forward to the comic.

I think *Dick Tracy* was better than *Batman*. It captured the spirit of the strip extremely well. Every performance, including, surprisingly, Madonna's, was excellent. I enjoyed all the cameos also. The one complaint I had was Warren Beatty's reserved performance—he is normally better. I do still feel that Ralph Byrd is the greatest Tracy ever. Thanks for Tom Weaver's wonderful article on the earlier movies.

Hugh H. Davis
101 East High Street
Murfreesboro, NC 27855

...I enjoyed the Grant Morrison article in COMICS SCENE #12 very much, though I would like to have read more about *Arkham Asylum* than *Animal Man* and *The Doom Patrol*. *Arkham* is a tremendous piece of work -a prime example of what the comics medium has going for it. The combination of words and images was overwhelming. I don't think that effect could be achieved in any other medium, save perhaps film. But even film wouldn't let you get that surrealistic.

What interested me the most, however, was Morrison's comments about the "British Comics Invasion." He asks, "Where are the comics equivalents of groups like the Doors and the Byrds—bands that took what the British groups did and turned it around from a unique American perspective?" The answer is this: We are continually being shut out by the medium that depends on us for its survival, both as readers and as tomorrow's creators. If every frustrated writer just got tired and stopped buying comics, where would the industry be? At the risk of sounding like those who oppose Japanese products simply because they are foreign, I have to ask why DC is looking in Britain for new talent when there is plenty right here. If DC wants to publish a unique Batman tale, then why not take a look at the one I sent them over a year ago? I spent about two years developing the story, yet they have never bothered to answer. Likewise, I have been waiting over eight months for a script that I sent to Eclipse at *their* request. The "American perspective" will never happen if the new American writers aren't given a chance.

I realize that the thousands of bad and mediocre writers trying to get into comics tend to overshadow the few that are truly talented, but the problem has been identified for some time now—let's find a solution. May I recommend an anthology series specifically aimed at new writers and artists?

If the comics medium is going to survive, we must get away from reworking every superhero who has ever existed and move more towards creating individual stories that stand on their own. Novelists don't always write about the same characters over and over (well, most don't), always retelling the same tales, so why should comics writers? I would much rather see Morrison adapt *When Rabbit Howls* than incorporate its ideas into *The Doom Patrol*.

Roger W. Alford
Art Director,
Business Digest of Greater Raleigh

...In your interview with Grant Morrison (CS #12), the ques-

Curtis Photo Copyright 1959 Columbia Pictures

WANTED! MORE ANIMATION FANS like Kelly Curtis, daughter of actress Janet Leigh (bending over) and actor Tony Curtis. Back in 1959 (when this photo was taken), Kelly, the sister of Jamie Lee Curtis, was obviously crazy about Huckleberry Hound.

tion of where the future comics writers might come from was posed. Well, the answer might be thumbing through the pages of your magazine right now. So, again I dare to ask, "How does one get into the comics business?"

In today's comics, all I can see are stagnating plotlines with violence reduced to a gimmick and humor that makes professional wrestling look like metaphysics. Where is that opening for that talented newcomer? I'm getting tired of looking for it. I, in the past year, have created at least 240 new characters and twice as many novel situations for them to work in. With numbers like that, you must think there has to be at least one viable title in the lot. I've tried the gritty graphic novel approach and got nowhere, but when I went purely mainstream, I received less.

Now I'm not trying to put Chris Claremont or Marv Wolfman out of a job, as all I really want is an entry-level position in order to learn the craft. Instead, I have enough form letters to wallpaper a room with.

Do you have any advice you can give me aside from quitting, as I'm not about to?

Jay McLellan
3164 Sunset Drive
New Waterford, N.S.
Canada, B1H 1K9

...As a fan of "classic" or older cartoons, I found CS #13 very enjoyable. The article on June Foray by Michael Mallory and the Grim Natwick interview by Kim Howard Johnson were informative and an enjoyable look back at Toons I grew up with.

As a big fan of Looney Tunes, I'm happy to see the attention given to these cartoons over the past few years, from your articles on Chuck Jones and Friz Freleng to the new books on Warner cartoons like *That's All Folks* and *Bugs Bunny: Fifty Years and Only One Grey Hare*. With all this attention, it seems that two of Warner's directors are forgotten or underrated: Robert McKimson and Art Davis. It's hard to compete with fellow directors like Tex Avery, Jones and Freleng, but these two directors have held their own. Other than creating Foghorn Leghorn and the Tasmanian Devil, McKimson is treated as if he didn't belong at Termite Terrace. Davis has had some good things written about his cartoons, but it's a rare mention. Your article was a fair treatment of this director.

Many of us Warner fans haven't heard much mention of Art Davis, so your article was full of "new" material. It may seem awkward to say, but before your piece, I didn't know that he was still around. "What Makes Daffy Duck," "Bowery Bugs" and "Catch as Cats Can" are very good cartoons, and the man behind them certainly deserves some of the Toon spotlight. Hopefully, this will lead to other articles on some forgotten people from the past, like McKimson, Norm McCabe, Richard H. Thomas, Carl Stallings, Milt Franklyn, Treg Brown and many more.

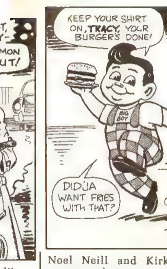
If this sees print, Art Davis, your cartoons are loved as much as any other cartoons, they are part of the great Warner cartoon library. Thanks for the laughs.

Hans Herdler
Address Withheld

...I would just like to take the opportunity to highly recommend Chuck Jones' autobiography, *Chuck Amuck*. It is one of those rare books that is perfect in every way. The book gives an in-depth view on the making of an animated short and feature length movie. The book is all the more fascinating due to the fact that he gives the origins of many of the major characters that have entertained millions over the years. This book will make you appreciate the characters that much more. There are plenty of color photos of many of the classics that Jones has directed, as well as black and white illustrations.

I have many fond memories as a child watching the cartoons that were directed by Chuck Jones. The unique thing was that while I was born with a hearing loss, it was not necessary to hear every single word that was being said. The actions of each and every single character were such that they were guaranteed to make you laugh. One only has to watch the hilarious Road Runner cartoons to realize what a sheer genius Jones was and continues to be. Each lovable character has a human trait that is only exaggerated with delightfully funny results!

One of the highlights of my life was to finally meet the man at the Atlanta Fantasy Fair in 1983. I had the pleasure of talking with him and his lovely daughter a few times during the convention. I shall always remember his kindness towards me during our chats. I found him to be a witty conversationalist who was fascinating to listen to. I still have the Polaroid snapshot that he had Linda Jones take of the two of us together. I, for one, will never forget that weekend!!



Art: David Garcia

Jim Morrow
4209 Olivia Drive
Charleston, SC 29418

Chuck Amuck *will be published in trade paperback ($12.95) by Avon in November.*

...Concerning the interview with Richard Donner in CS #11, I thought it was excellent, very interesting but also very sad. Sad when thinking of how much better *Superman II* might have been if Donner (who helmed the first film) had directed it.

Don't get me wrong, *Superman II* was a good movie, and director Richard Lester did a fine job, giving the film his own little unique touches of humor, but the scenes described, that Donner shot for the sequel to be later refilmed by Lester, in my opinion, would have worked better, creating a style much more similar to that of the excellent first film. I would have loved to have seen Donner's re-creation of the classic comic scene with Lois firing a gun (loaded with blanks) at Clark, in an attempt to prove he's Superman.

Speaking of the first *Superman* movie, for years I've been waiting for the extra long version, shown twice by ABC in the early '80s to pop up again sometime on TV. It hasn't, at least not where I live. It restored such invaluable footage as an extended Noel Neill and Kirk Alyn cameo and a spectacular sequence where Superman is subjected to the trials of fire, ice and bullets while en route to Luthor's lair. Is this version still in existence, somewhere, on videocassette maybe?

Danny Bell
1101 Elder Heights Drive
Bishop, GA 30621

...I think you should devote a page to upcoming projects, listed by artist and writers. It would be like your Comics Screen page.

My next request is for a full-length article on Jim Lee. He is one of the best.

Arnold Jordan
12955 S.W. 53 Street
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Bombers

(continued from page 15)

Church, Fortier recognizes that by this action, it's possible he may offend Jew and gentile alike.

"The way I set it up, with the Jewish people believing this is the Messiah and following where that would go logically is not something that is screamed in neon up front, and if it's even mentioned at all, it's a very rare reference," Fortier stresses. "I'm not concerned with Jewish feedback at all. I'm *positive* I'm going to get Christians who are going to want to string me up. I have no doubts about that whatsoever, because the minute they realize that I have Jesus as a *female*, then I have committed the greatest sacrilege in their minds. It's shaky ground, and I knew that when I was doing it. I guess my only defensible argument would be to say that God really doesn't have a sex."

And yet, even under a lingering climate that saw the premature end to Rick Veitch's tenure on *Swamp Thing* because he wanted to place the marsh master at the Crucifixion and pickets in front of theaters showing *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Fortier prefers to believe that *Boston Bombers* will avoid any great outcry.

"To be quite honest, I'm still optimistic enough—and this definitely comes from my religious perspectives of the world—that most people are willing to listen. Most people are willing to look at different perspectives and new ideas and maybe judge a little fairer than we give them credit for. There are going to be people out there who will simply look at the surface of what I've done and say, 'It's just garbage! How dare he do that?' I have to bring up an incident. In the past, I wrote several *Popeye* stories and one day got one of those comics back in the mail, sent to me totally ripped to shreds, with a little five by seven card saying that because I had written that particular *Popeye* the way I did, I was going to be damned forever to hell. So, if you're going to crack eggs writing something as harmless and fun-loving as *Popeye*, then I'm sure that when you deal with characters of religion, and especially Jesus, ultimately, people are going to make you a target."

Says Ron Fortier, "The catch-22 with all this is: For anybody out there who's reading this article and wants to start throwing stones at yours truly, I would ask them to do what I try to do every day of my life in those kinds of situations, and that's very honestly say, 'What would Jesus do if he were in this position?' and go from there."

Russell

(continued from page 19)

bring to bear on it are all the elements of graphic storytelling. It has to succeed or fail on all those elements as a comic book, *not* as an adaptation, but as an exploration of this form. *That's* what it needs to be critiqued on."

In his most recent collaboration, with writer J. Marc DeMatteis on a five-part *Legends of the Dark Knight*, Russell faces a challenge presented by subject matter. "The Child Within" deals with Batman and his newest adversary's paralleling experiences with child abuse.

"One of the very first things I talked to Marc about was that I was less interested in dealing with the sexual abuse [as it affects the story's villain], which is on everyone's mind, as in, say, physical abuse or the *witnessing* of abuse. There are so many ways in which trauma can come to a child. Just witnessing something happening as a child, which Bruce Wayne did with the murder of his parents.

"I think there are so many wider implications of trauma and how they surface years later. But yes, I know it's very touchy, and I'm concerned that what message there is rises out of the story and is not tacked on as 'the message.' If you show something instead of stating it, that you as an artist or a writer might have something you want to say but you let it rise out of the story's events, then you let the readers draw their own conclusions.

"It can backfire. There's always a chance of that."

Russell is speaking from experience. Just recently, an example of something that didn't work out was a multi-part story for *Marvel Comics Presents* that would have reunited him with his signature character, Killraven. As it stands, that reunion is *not* in the future.

"We talked about it a couple of years ago, and [series writer] Don McGregor was writing a script that was supposed to be 64 pages. He was up to, like, 130 pages and he barely cracked the thing. I was going to be spending a couple of years on a project that they would make no commitment as to collecting in book form.

"It was to be done in eight-page segments. I lost interest from a production standpoint. I didn't want to dedicate two or three years of my art to a company that's going to own everything, and not even present it well," P. Craig Russell explains, frustrated that the project never grew to fruition. "I like to round things off, to finish things, but it doesn't always work out that way."

Flash

(continued from page 12)

shtick nor the *Superman* TV series' run-of-the-mill crooks.

"We'll be adapting the villains the same way we did Barry Allen," De Meo says. "If there's another costumed villain running around the city, there's going to be a specific reason why he's wearing the costume. And while we're mining the comics for villains, we're going to be taking our own direction with them."

The Flash on TV seems like a good idea, but the question remains: Why the Flash, as opposed to Congo Bill or Green Arrow? Chaykin points to such characters as Green Lantern or Hawkman as being "special FX nightmares" to create for television. De Meo, however, paints a much rosier picture for *The Flash*.

"I think doing *The Flash* is a good idea at this point in time. We have the technology to present the character the way he is presented in the comic books. We can show the blurring speed images in a believable manner. We can also show another side of Barry Allen besides crime-fighting."

Producer Bilson chimes in with the main goal of the creative minds behind *The Flash*.

"For this show to work, it's going to have to be believable. We can't even begin to make fun of our source material. *The Flash* is serious business. People read comic books like *The Flash* because they want to believe what they're reading. Our show is believable in its intensity, sense of danger and excitement, all the things that make comics interesting."

But the fact still remains whether *The Flash* will be around long enough to draw an audience hooked on speed. At presstime, *The Flash* is still slated for a Thursday at 8 p.m. time slot on CBS opposite *The Cosby Show* and *The Simpsons*. De Meo and Bilson admit that they're up against the toughest contenders possible but bravely state that "*The Flash* is certainly strong enough to be fighting it out in that slot."

Chaykin, ever the realist, concedes a certain amount of fear at the seeming suicide mission *The Flash*, in this regard, seems on.

"I'm terrified at the prospect," Howard Chaykin confesses. "I cried like a baby when I heard. But after I stopped crying, I knew that I would go out with the idea of competing against those shows in the most hard-boiled attitude I could muster. If we all go in with that attitude, who knows? We just *might* win."

Of Marsh & Men

Swamp Thing shambles on to weekly TV. Will he take root or sink into a video bog?

By BILL WILSON

He has survived numerous encounters with Arcane's mutants, the amorous advances of the vile doctor's beautiful niece, Abby, two less-than-faithful big-screen adaptations and a near-rendezvous with Jesus Christ, but now Swamp Thing faces his most formidable challenge ever: TV ratings!

For this half-hour weekly USA Network paycable series produced by MCA Television and BBK Productions, Swamp Thing is a product of his environment and its sole defender. Lingering in the shadows rather than running around in broad daylight, he is befriended by young Jimmy Kipp, a habitual liar and transplanted city boy now living with his mother and grandmother at the edge of Swampy's domain. Constantly battling Dr. Arcane and his menagerie of mutants, Swamp

All Swamp TV Photos: Copyright 1990 Julie B. Fletcher/BBF Productions

The boy who cried "Swamp Thing" is Jesse Zeigler. His non-believer mother is played by Carrell Myers.

In keeping with the Len Wein and Berni Wrightson era, TV's Arcane will also be unleashing un-men like the lurid Swamp Maiden and the loathsome Toad Boy (makeup by Alterian Studios).

Thing wages a one-plant crusade to preserve his habitat and, of course, to protect the innocent.

Swamp Thing: The Series was originally set to debut July 27th and continue through October. To meet this deadline, cast and crew had to film episodes of a three-day, 6-hour pace, six days a week, thereby producing the *entire* 13-episode order in the record time of just under seven weeks, not counting post-production.

As things turned out, a last-minute decision on the heels of weeks of hype and press coverage branded the premiere episode a "summer sneak preview," with the series itself rescheduled for a fall start, thereby permitting extra time for tinkering.

Mark Lindsay Chapman takes over for Louis Jourdan as Arcane—a role that interested Anthony Perkins until it conflicted with shooting *Psycho IV*.

In the hands of supervising producer Joseph Stefano (of *Outer Limits* and *Psycho* fame) and producer Boris Malden, *Swamp Thing* has been crafted to appeal directly to the type of audience expected to carry over from USA's other genre series, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Ray Bradbury Theater*.

"We began last fall," Malden explains, "but it didn't finally come together until March. Then, it was a matter of finding somebody who could give it that certain creative texture, and that's where Joe Stefano came in. To a large extent, the series carries Joe's stamp, but we're limited by dealing with a pre-existing comic book and film character, so we've had to stay somewhat within those guidelines. The direction we've taken the characters in has come primarily from Joe. My responsibilities are line producing the show, putting it all together, making it all work, paying the bills...the fun stuff."

The frenetic shooting schedule has presented numerous problems. "The nights aren't so bad, but we had some days at 104 degrees and 90% humidity, and a week of that takes a lot out of you," Malden offers. He says this as cast and crew huddle in the brush of Universal Florida Studios' undeveloped acreage, swatting mosquitoes and dousing each other with bug spray, fighting the elements and the 80-degree, post-midnight heat as they race against the clock to beat a 6:30 a.m. plan to wrap this segment. And they're all still laughing and clowning around between takes.

"All post-production and special FX are handled on the premises at Century III," Malden continues. "With a three-day shooting schedule and a full week for the original music to be composed for each episode, I could conceivably deliver an episode in two weeks' time. You always wish you had more time, but we're dealing with a medium where there's no right or wrong. Some of the most artistic projects are far from the most financially successful, and vice versa."

As for comparisons to the kinds of budgets enjoyed by network television series, Malden remarks: "Let's face it, we're dealing with less money than if this were being produced by one of the big three because cable doesn't yet generate those kinds of advertising dollars. You just have to find a way to make it all work given those kinds of constraints. It's no reflection whatsoever on how good the scripts may be, but the budget determines just how much time you can spend on any one set or just how many locations you can have in a given episode. Those are the sacrifices you have to make, hope-

Swamp Thing Character: Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc.

fully ones that won't affect what's seen on the screen."

The task of actually creating a Swamp Thing for television fell to the trio of Chet and Lisa Zar and Jim Beinke, all of Tony Gardner's Alterian Studios whose credits include *Darkman* and *The Blob*. Utilizing the molds from the Carl Fullerton "swamp suit" designed for the last film (see CS#7), Alterian created a new face, hands and feet to "humanize" the character and also to ease the preparation process, thereby reducing makeup time to meet the fast shooting pace.

"We devised three different faces for Swamp Thing, and the producers picked the one which was more subtle, more human," Chet Zar explains. "One which was very faithful to the comic book was deemed too 'mean'."

By now, of course, Dick Durock (STARLOG #142) should be used to the gruelling hours spent in the makeup chair, having endured the process to play the character in his previous big-screen endeavors.

"Each time you tell yourself, 'Never again,' " Durock laughs, "and each time here you are. Out of necessity, of course, these guys have reduced the process from five separate facial appliances to just one, so it's considerably shorter now. But you *never* really get used to it."

The biggest challenges for this makeup team have come in developing the wide assortment of mutants and monsters that are the by-products of Arcane's hideous research.

"One episode called for a 'Swamp Woman' character, and we had all of *one* day to complete it," Lisa Zar explains. "And because it required the same type of full-body costuming as Swamp Thing—I mean, Swampy isn't exactly the kind of character you create hands, feet and a face for and put on a shirt and pair of pants! We had to create the costume using a body suit and various other appliances and pieces of swampy, stringy stuff we had lying around."

Revealing just what made him don the suit once again, Durock quips, "They made me an offer I couldn't refuse. But it was also because Joe Stefano happened to be behind one of my all-time favorite TV shows, *The Outer Limits*. These scripts reflect his influence; very intelligently written—very bright, very adult."

As for comparisons to the previous films, who better to make them than the man who wore the suit in all three projects? "This series is its own entity. Let's face it, the last film was close to nothing. Not to be facetious, but they chose to go with the campy stuff...right, wrong or otherwise. At 10:30 p.m. on Friday nights, this series is definitely *not* kid's stuff. But it's not blood and gore either. This character is so different from the two films, that last one especially. No longer will Swamp Thing come off as this big, lovable boob."

With this adult approach, the human angle of Alec Holland trapped in the body of muck is more fully explored, as Durock explains. "There's really not that much pathos. Is he in his own misery? There's a little bit of that, but he internalizes much more. He still appears in time of need, but it's not like John Wayne rushing in, throwing 87 punches and whipping all the bad guys. He's more a reluctant crusader, depressed about the state of the world, than a superhero. He makes a point to not kill any living creature; he has alternative methods of dealing with problems. Swamp Thing would prefer being a man to being green, but he has also accepted the fact that that's probably *not* going to change. His knowing what he was before is the character's salvation. When he sees a woman, he still has desires, but of course, it does nothing but cause frustration for him.

"From what I can *see*, the series is truer to the comics, but I rely primarily on the scripts to tell me which way to go," Durock continues. "You're talking about a character with very dim parameters. It's easy to go from one extreme to the other, so you search for that middle ground, and that's where the scripts have been very definitive. At the beginning, they may have been a little loose, but I guess you find your way after a while. The uniqueness of this series is that it doesn't rely on gore, cussing, vivid sex or anything like that for that matter, but it's still literate and adult. If you're looking for answers to questions like 'Well, how many arms do you tear off each episode?' sorry, guys...there's none of that stuff here."

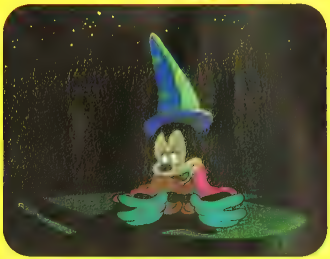
For the pivotal role of Dr. Arcane, the producers tapped actor Mark Lindsay Chapman, perhaps best known for the role he *didn't* get. (His portrayal of John Lennon in the NBC TV-movie bio was vetoed by his wife Yoko Ono, due to the uncanny coincidence that the actor's name was the same as Lennon's murderer.) Here he embodies a younger, more sophisticated Anton Arcane, the

(continued on page 66)

On its 50th anniversary, Disney restores a classic's sights & sounds.

FANTASIA

By DAVID HUTCHISON



Previous prints (left) of Fantasia show Mickey in dim, faded colors; full saturation and clarity (right) achieved in the restored version

In the space of only 12 short years, animation at the Disney Studios progressed from "Steamboat Willie" with its rubber-hose animation, stark black-and-white drawings and scratchy soundtrack to *Fantasia* with its full, realistic animation, multi-planed layers of Technicolor backgrounds and a revolutionary new multi-channel high fidelity sound system.

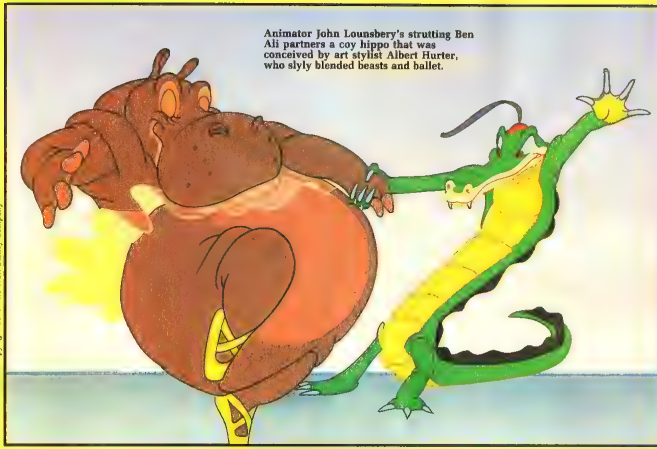
Using technology years ahead of its time, *Fantasia* was forced to rely on limited roadshow distribution, frequently requiring the conversion of legitimate theaters that had never seen a movie screen and incurring costs up to $85,000 simply to install the new projection systems. Some theaters, such as the Geary in San Francisco, even had to build a projection booth from scratch.

Sadly, every release of this legendary film since 1942 has been a dupe print, and sometimes a very poor one at that. In preparation for *Fantasia*'s 50th anniversary, Disney elected to go back to the original camera negative in order to re-create the original *Fantasia* experience of sight and sound.

According to the technicians charged with the film's restoration, *Fantasia* will actually look better in 1990 than it did in 1940. "We've compared samples all the way back from nitrate prints to the 1951 studio dye transfer print that was in its original cans and had never been run or touched. We also ran reel 2AB from the 1982 release. That was rather grim. Though a new digital soundtrack had been made, the picture was *not* very wonderful," states Pete Comandini, one of the principals at YCM Laboratories in Burbank, the company doing the film's restoration.

"We did a side-by-side comparison with the 1985 version and what we've done. That version was very flat, very much on the green side, with thin blacks. We've pretty much tried to restore the look of original IBs [Technicolor dye transfer prints] with very saturated colors, good blacks and a lot of sparkle. The process that we use for restoration tends to accentuate highlight detail and color subtlety. The classic dye transfer prints tend to accentuate shadow detail and usually tend to be one predominant color or another.

The principle behind the Technicolor three-strip camera (camera number D-22) is explained to conductor Stokowski during live action filming in early 1940.



Animator John Lounsbery's strutting Ben Ali partners a coy hippo that was conceived by art stylist Albert Hurter, who slyly blended beasts and ballet.

All Fantasia Photos Copyright 1940 The Walt Disney Company

"The closing 'Ave Maria' sequence was a big surprise for me. It has always looked very monochrome—murky and drab—and, in my personal opinion, not very impressive. When we got into it, and made the master and started testing back to internegative, there are a great number of colors in there that I was never aware of, and we changed the timing to try to enhance all of that.

"We go from original camera negatives to a master positive. From that, we manufacture the color internegative, which becomes what Disney calls their lab original. We answer print that, screen it with the studio, get approval on it. That answer print becomes the guide print for whatever laboratory is doing the release. They will make their own conversion print from our printer lights or answer print, get that approved, and make the internegative that will make the final prints. In the case of the Disney classics, there will be two sets of protection masters manufactured; one will be kept at the studio and the other in protected storage."

The first part of the restoration process involved tracking down as many original camera elements as possible. Comandini compares the process of finding and assembling all the bits and pieces of negative that eventually became *Fantasia* to solving a giant jigsaw puzzle.

The Chinese Dance from the "Nutcracker Suite" was originally conceived by Disney as a group of lizards wearing flowers in the shape of coolie hats, but the concept evolved into mushrooms animated by Art Babbitt; FX animation by Jules Engel.

Their search began with "some cans with numbers, and an inventory list that was reasonably accurate. But inventory lists don't really tell you the history. And some of the historical cutting data on memos from the early '40s gave us a clue as to what had been done, but not exactly *how* it had been done; we just had to get in there and discover that for ourselves.

"We started by checking the elements and receiving them all in, and we of course got everything: deletions, cut rolls dupe number one, cut rolls dupe number two, in some cases dupe number three. It took a couple of months to sort through all of this to figure out what was what, where the original negative was, and how much we could get back to.

A prehistoric battle for survival illustrates Stravinsky's ballet music. Animator Wolfgang Reitherman was instructed to avoid any hint of cute anthropormorphism.

Igor Stravinsky inspects the storyboards with Walt Disney for the dinosaur battle that has been set to excerpts of his ballet music, "The Rite of Spring."

"And then, when we knew we were missing something—the beginnings of 'The Pastorale' and 'Night on Bald Mountain' were dupes—we called the vaults and had them go through *every* can and record, looking for the missing pieces. Then, my partners and I went over and went through their vaults, just in case they had missed something. We found some interesting pieces that didn't relate to *Fantasia*, deletions from early cartoons, but we didn't find the pieces. They probably disappeared in the early '40s."

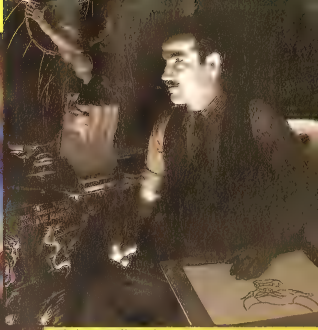
Still, remarks Comandini, "I think we managed to find about 80% of the original nitrate negative. When this picture was originally put together, it was a mess. You can't intercut three-strip negative with successive exposure. So, every time we had the orchestra, we had a three-strip roll. When we went into animation, we had successive exposure, then, back to the orchestra and three-strip. It was back and forth, back and forth. Disney had to pay for sections; they couldn't just order reel 1A, they had to order reel 1A Main Title, reel 1A Section 1, reel 1A Section 2. And each section had its own leaders; so not only were they paying for the labor of putting all these sections together to form a final print, but they were also paying for all that leader.

"Sometime in the '40s, somebody tried to consolidate all this by taking everything that was three-strip, making masters and duping that back to successive negative. Well, OK, at that point, we could cut all the three-strip in as dupe. But they went a step further than that, and they said, 'Any reel that contains mixed three-strip and SE [successive exposure], dupe the whole reel.' At that point, anything where a mix occurred, such as 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice,' and ends with Leopold Stokowski, that became an entire dupe somewhere in the '40s. And that's the way it has been seen ever since."

In addition to repairing splices and sprocket holes on the negative before a new wet-gate master was printed, the staff at YCM found themselves performing microsurgery on a frame-by-frame basis to remove or minimize defects in the film.

The entire restoration process occupied the YCM staff for two years.

Artist Kay Nielsen was not with the Disney Studios for very long, but his concept art had major influence in the look for both "Night on Bald Mountain" and "Ave Maria."



Vladimir "Bill" Tytla, who had studied sculpture in Paris, was known for the solidity and power of his art; his characterization of Tchernabog, the lord of evil and death in "Night on Bald Mountain", has been proclaimed by his peers as the most "awesome piece of animation ever to reach the screen."

Fantasia began as a one-reel short for Mickey Mouse. About a year before *Snow White*'s completion, Walt Disney became aware that the studio couldn't go back to making the Silly Symphonies, the unofficial training ground for Disney's first feature. *Snow White* would set a new standard of excellence, so it was decided to improve the Silly Symphonies by abandoning the practice of using music created by Disney staff composers Frank Churchill and Leigh Harline and looking instead for something in the standard repertory, preferably something with a story attached to it, that might serve as a vehicle for the studio's star, Mickey Mouse.

By mid-1937, Disney had acquired the rights to Paul Dukas' symphonic poem, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," which had premiered in 1897. Shortly thereafter, Disney happened upon composer/conductor Leopold Stokowski during dinner at Chasen's Restaurant. Stokowski had been in Hollywood working on the Universal picture *One Hundred Men and a Girl*, and was immediately interested in Disney's plans. Likewise, Disney was intrigued by the new multi-channel sound system used for *One Hundred Men*.

Years earlier, Stokowski and the Philadelphians had participated in the first stereo sound tests with Bell Laboratories in 1931 and 1932. Committed to making serious music accessible to all people, Stokowski seemed to anticipate Disney's aspirations. In early 1937, he stated, "Hollywood can do for music what all the conductors have never done. It can interpret a composition by actual pictures. It can make living what is now abstract. It can widen the dreams of men to include the masterpieces of Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms. It can, through the miracles of the camera, transform a fugue into a drama—a symphony into a sweeping cavalcade."

"The Sorcerer's Apprentice" was recorded in January 1938 at the Selznick Studio, and the remainder of the score at the Philadelphia Academy of Music in April 1939.

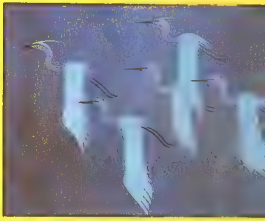
With their chance meeting, an historic collaboration was born. At the time, Disney had only envisioned a seven or eight-minute short, but before long, the costs for this one-reeler were edging close to $125,000, three or four times a typical Silly Symphony budget—and the decision was made to transform the short into a full-length film with eight separate animated segments under the working title *Concert Feature*.

Disney had become so fired up after his talks with Stokowski that the producer wanted his audience to feel as if they were standing on the podium with Stokowski. Even the picture would expand beyond the confines of the traditional Academy aperture. Disney spoke of a projection system which would create the images of brooms marching down each side of the theater.

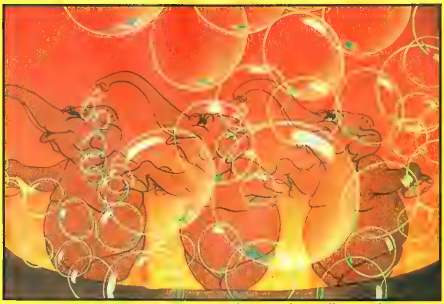
While Disney's dream of widescreen projection for animated features was still decades in the future, his idea for a multi-channel surround sound system became Fantasound, and was developed in collaboration with RCA. The recording system, according to Disney Sound Department head Herb Taylor, involved 33 microphones placed throughout the 110 piece orchestra.

"The recording was done on eight channels," Taylor says. "Six of them were arranged to get a well-separated pick-up of violins, celli, bases, violas, brass, woodwinds and timpani. A separate channel recorded a mix of the six channels and a channel recorded the complete orchestra with a distant pick-up."

All of these tracks, which were recorded optically on sound film, were remixed into three tracks—left, center and right; a fourth track con-



Debussy's "Claie de Lune" was deleted from the film and never finished; Disney hoped to use it and "Peter and the Wolf" in a planned sequel to *Fantasia*



The most whimsically surrealistic sequence is Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours" in which elephants float like bubbles and perform with ostriches.

Animation for the Beethoven "Pastoral" included the artistry of animators Fred Moore, Ward Kimball, Eric Larsen, Art Babbitt and Walt Kelly among others; a few cuts made in the 1950s to eliminate some unfortunate black stereotype characters have also been retained in this 50th anniversary restored version.

sisted of control tones that automatically adjusted the sound levels. Picture and sound were played back separately in the theater using interlocked synchronous motors. Early versions of Fantasound made extensive use of manually panned sound effects. In fact, it was necessary for a sound technician to perform moving sound effects in much the same way that a laser jockey performs live light shows today.

Later versions of Fantasound limited this "live performer" aspect, so that the shows would be consistent from performance to performance.

Fantasound required massive installations of dozens of speakers and many auxiliary amplifiers in order to achieve not only the left, center and right directional sound effects, but left and right in-theater surround sound effects.

Movies with sound had only been standard for little more than a decade when *Fantasia* premiered at New York's Broadway Theater (formerly known as the Colony Theater, where "Steamboat Willie" had premiered 12 years earlier) on November 13, 1940. It had cost $85,000 to install the new equipment. Sadly, the rapid approach of World War II cut the studio off from its all important foreign markets and soon made shouldering such an expense impossible even for theater owners at home, and so, comparatively few people ever saw or heard *Fantasia* as Disney and Stokowski had intended. In all, the studio was only able to equip 14 theaters—one in Canada and the rest in the US—for this revolution in sight and sound.

Indeed, *Fantasia* has had a sad and checkered career ever since its New York opening. Originally, the running time was two hours, four minutes and 40 seconds. By 1942, it had been cut to 88 minutes, mostly by deleting narrator Deems Taylor's introductions and the intermission. The 1947 version, upon which, according to film editor John Carnohan, this 50th anniversary release is based, restores the running time to two hours by reinstating Taylor's program introductions as voice-overs, though his presence is still seen at the picture's beginning; the original intermission after Igor Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" has been eliminated.

For the 1956 re-release, an attempt was made to honor Disney's original desire for a widescreen presentation by duping the animated sequences into *Super*Scope and re-mixing the Fantasound tracks for four-track magnetic. This print played again in 1963, but by 1969, *Fantasia* was back to its original 1.33 Academy aperture and with a single monophonic optical soundtrack. In 1982, the picture was cropped to 1.75, and the Stokowski soundtrack was completely replaced with a new digital recording of the score conducted by Irwin Kostal, who, for the sake of the animation, was locked into Stokowski's tempi, though a number of changes were made in the orchestration.

Disney sound editor Terry Porter, in charge of *Fantasia*'s soundtrack for this 50th anniversary, explains that while it was possible, for the most part, to restore the picture from the original negative, the original sound elements for *Fantasia* no longer exist.

"To our knowledge," Porter begins, "there is *no* original Fantasound optical print in existence. The source we used and the earliest source that the studio has in multi-channel sound is a 1955 magnetic transfer of the original optical Fantasound theater track.

"As I've been able to piece the story together, back in 1955, Disney did not have a magnetic recorder—they were pretty new at the time. So, they took the three optical soundtracks and the optical control track, played it back here in the theater on the lot, piped it over the Class A phone lines to the RCA building in Burbank, and recorded it.

"From what I can tell by listening to that transfer, they sent it through the Fantasound control track because the dynamic range of sound far exceeds the possibilities of an ordinary optical track. Also, the wild sound panning effects are built in. It's not like today, where you would record a nice broad orchestral sound with maybe a piccolo slightly on the left. I mean, when the Fantasound technicians panned the orchestra, they would take the whole violin section and whip it back and forth across the theater."

Details Porter, "The numbers in which we had the most difficulty creating a modern Dolby surround stereo track are the ones in which the overhead mike was used to create a broad sound and then individual sections were panned. That's where we ran into phase problems with the Dolby system. In the Russian Dance in 'Nutcracker,' for example, they kept the orchestra very broad and then

(continued on page 66)

Short Stories

By JAMI BERNARD

One theory goes that no one is immune from having a bad childhood. It's a theory that is completely compatible with that other theory—that no one will *admit* to having a bad childhood. Cartoonist Michael Fry, author of the new syndicated comic strip *When I Was Short*, says his childhood was "ordinary," which certainly doesn't disprove either theory. But cartoonist Guy Vasilovich, who draws the strip, goes further out on a limb and says his childhood was "adventurous."

Whatever their childhoods were, the sum total of them have been filtered through the various configurations of memory, art and commercial considerations, and out has come *When I Was Short*, a comic strip about the joys, pains, surprises and idiosyncracies of growing up.

The strip centers on the life of Mason, who appears at various ages, as remembered by an adult narrator looking back with fondness and humor. Mason didn't have a "bad" childhood per se, but that's the magic of the adult narration—with the aid of hindsight and perspective, even the worst childhood trauma can seem funny today. When Mason's new bell bottoms shrink in the wash, he goes from looking "groovy" to looking ridiculous. "I wasn't afraid to take a fashion risk," says Mason, parachuting off his garage roof with the unbelievably short bellbottoms flapping around his calves. In real childhood, shrunken pant legs can lead to an acute attack of first-degree embarrassment, and may even be sufficient cause to stay locked in your room for the rest of your life.

"It's probably a mistake to think that Mason is exactly like me. Some aspects of the strip are very autobiographical and others are made up," says Fry from his home in Houston. "Because of the diminutive-sounding title, Mason as a character is somebody who stands back from the action, who reacts, who I guess you could say is a victim. Things were probably not quite that black and white for me. For Mason, it's simpler this way."

WHEN I WAS SHORT, I USED TO SIT IN MY ROOM AND REMINISCE ABOUT WHEN...
... I WAS SHORTER
THOSE WERE THE DAYS... I HAD THE SPEED LIGHT ALL TO MYSELF
MY EVERY MOVE WAS RECORDED FOR ALL POSTERITY
THIS WENT ON FOR YEARS... NOT A CARE IN THE WORLD UNTIL ONE DAY...
A Co Star?
LATER...
SHE'S A GRADE EIGHT MOM.
IT ALL CAME CRASHING DOWN
She's stealing MY SCENES!
THERE I WAS, AGE 7, A WASHED-UP HAS-BEEN...
I'D BECOME...
SCREEN!
SOMEDAY SOON!
I'LL FAMILY REUNION!

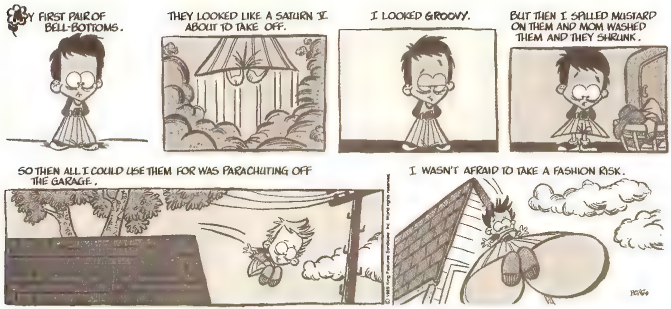
A new comic strip recalls how rotten the good old days really were.

THIS IS MY BABY SISTER, KATHLEEN. MY PARENTS CALL HER THEIR BUNDLE OF JOY...
... BUT I KNEW HER BY HER REAL NAME...
KATZILLA
DESTROYER OF WORLDS
... MINE IN PARTICULAR.

"Some aspects of the strip are very autobiographical," admits writer Michael Fry, including his share of sibling rivalry.

Then again, Fry quotes something writer John Irving once said when angered by questions about truth vs. fiction in his writing: "I want to be respected for how well I make things up."

It took Fry close to two years to launch his idea; now it's syndicated by King Features to 150 newspapers, and growing. "When I presented the idea back in '88, many syndicates liked it, but for one reason or another, almost all of them rejected it," Fry explains. But King Features editor Jay Kennedy didn't give up on the idea. "Jay came back to me and said he liked it, but he felt my artwork wouldn't give it the kind of shot it needed to be successful. Late in the year, he suggested I look at this other guy's work." The other guy's name, in


MY FIRST PAIR OF BELL-BOTTOMS.
THEY LOOKED LIKE A SATURN V. ABOUT TO TAKE OFF.
I LOOKED GROOVY.
BUT THEN I SPILLED MUSTARD ON THEM AND MOM WASHED THEM AND THEY SHRUNK.
SO THEN ALL I COULD USE THEM FOR WAS PARACHUTING OFF THE GARAGE.
I WASN'T AFRAID TO TAKE A FASHION RISK.

"We got into all kinds of mischief," recalls artist Guy Vasilovich, whose Disney animation background comes in handy when Mason gets into trouble.

BEDTIME FESTIVITIES WERE HIGHLY RITUALIZED.
THERE WAS THE STORY WITH WHICH MY FATHER WOULD TAKE SOME LIBERTIES...
... and then Little Red Riding Hood took out her grenade launcher...
THERE WERE THE PRAYERS WITH WHICH I WOULD TAKE SOME LIBERTIES...
God bless Bugs Bunny, God bless Road Runner, God bless Johnny Quest...
AND THEN OF COURSE THE CEREMONIAL TURNING ON OF THE NIGHTLIGHT.
Night Kid.
CLICK!
All Short Art: Guy Vasilovich

"Our major competition is *Calvin and Hobbes*, but I think it's a completely different strip," says the writer.

fact, *is* Guy, as in Guy Vasilovich, a Disney "Imagineer" who works in a real Mickey Mouse operation, a sort of think-tank where he's expected to come up with ideas and sketches for theme-park attractions. This new team calls itself Fry & Guy.

"Guy draws similarly to my style, only he's much more—what's the word I want?—he's *better* than me," admits Fry, laughing ruefully. "I've been working as a cartoonist for 10 years, and my drawing has always been my weakest link. Nowadays, cartooning is so competitive you really need every edge. Guy is an animator with Disney, he's as professional as you can get, and he does a lot of action in the strip, a lot of movement. My style is more Garry Trudeau, characters that are very static."

As a former art director and layout man for such Disney animated features as *The Great Mouse Detective*, Vasilovich finds ample opportunity in *When I Was Short* to demonstrate his skill at drawing action. For example, there is the strip in which Mason discovers one of his greatest talents: making rude noises by rubbing one hand vigorously under his other arm.

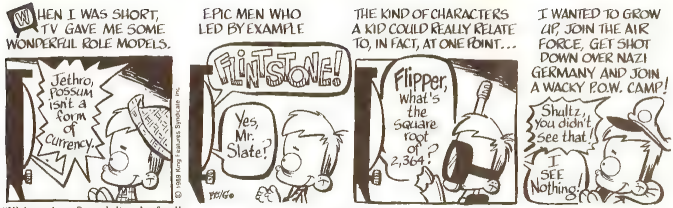
Fry lives in Houston, Guy in LA, which makes for a hi-tech collaboration that owes a great deal to something neither of these thirtysomething men had around the house as kids—the FAX machine. "I write about a week's worth of strips at a time. I do some roughs, showing where to place the characters, and we work by FAX," Fry details. "After Jay Kennedy approves it in New York, we send it to LA, and Guy does a rough sketch. We look at that again in New York and here in Houston, and when that's approved, Guy finishes it in ink and sends it to New York."

Although he earns a 50 percent financial split, Fry admits that his end takes less time than it takes Vasilovich to draw. "I spend about 20 or 30 hours a week on it," notes Vasilovich. "We have six dailies and one Sunday. I get into it a little more than most people. The uniqueness of our strip calls for a bit of research, specialized cars, products, things people actually know about. It pays to be accurate."

Fry and grew up in Minneapolis, MN, and drew editorial cartoons for the school newspapers at Baylor University and the University of Texas at Austin, where he received a "totally useless" degree in history. He first got interested in cartooning by reading Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury*. "His early work was atrociously drawn, but it didn't seem to matter. It was still funny, it got the point across. If he could do it, I could do it. My only regret is that I didn't take more art classes."

His first cartoon was published in *Playboy*. He went to Houston hoping for a career as a political cartoonist, but it didn't work out, although he does a regular editorial-page cartoon called *Scotty* for the *Houston Post*. Scotty is a fictional aide to the local mayor; "it's topical and political," says Fry. He also syndicated a topical strip called *Cheeverwood* for a few years. "It ran in very few papers," he admits.

His idea with *When I Was Short* was not so much to explore the vicissitudes of childhood as "to do a mainstream, accessible strip." Childhood was a fertile ground for ideas. "There are a million strips out there with that


WHEN I WAS SHORT, TV GAVE ME SOME WONDERFUL ROLE MODELS.
Jethro, possum isn't a form of currency.
EPIC MEN WHO LED BY EXAMPLE
FLINTSTONE!
Yes, Mr. Slate!
THE KIND OF CHARACTERS A KID COULD REALLY RELATE TO, IN FACT, AT ONE POINT...
Flipper, what's the square root of 2,364?
I WANTED TO GROW UP, JOIN THE AIR FORCE, GET SHOT DOWN OVER NAZI GERMANY AND JOIN A WACKY P.O.W. CAMP!
Shultz, you didn't see that!
I SEE Nothing!
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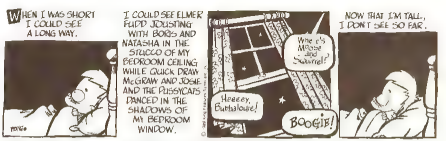
TRUDEAU

"We're going after adults who fondly remember growing up," explains Fry.


WHEN I WAS SHORT I COULD SEE A LONG WAY.
I COULD SEE ELMER FUDD JOUSTING WITH BORIS AND NATASHA IN THE STUCCO OF MY BEDROOM CEILING WHILE QUICK DRAW MCGRAW AND JOSIE AND THE PUSSYCATS DANCED IN THE SHADOWS OF MY BEDROOM WINDOW.
Wow, it's Mission Impossible and Sabrina!!
Heavy, Buttsbone!
BOOGIE!
NOW THAT I'M TALL, I DON'T SEE SO FAR.
TRUDEAU

The narrator is quick to point out the shortcomings of adulthood.

theme, but I hit on the idea of a narrator as an adult telling what it was like, and the kid, Mason, acts it out, and is shown at different ages. It's *incredibly* open-ended. It allows for many different variations. The narrator keeps the whole thing focused, so the reader doesn't get lost, wondering where we are all the time."

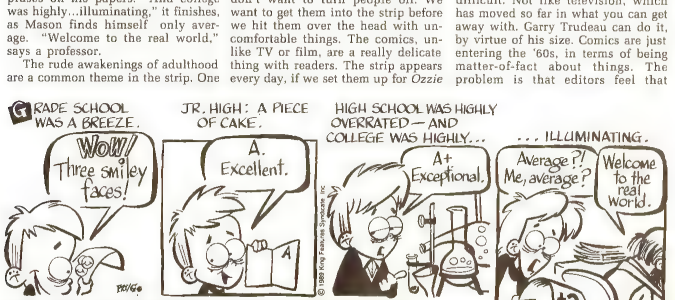
Initially, Mason was to be about seven years old most of the time, and in fact, he is. "Age seven is what I launched from. Originally, I *didn't* want to jump around too much, and I only occasionally jump to other ages. But as the readers become more familiar with the strip, it doesn't really matter."

One strip mourns the loss of the brilliance you once thought was yours. "Grade school was a breeze," says the narrator, while Mason is shown completing his simple homework which earns him a set of smiley faces. "Junior high, a piece of cake; high school was highly overrated," says the narrator, while Mason successively gets A's and A pluses on his papers. "And college was highly...illuminating," it finishes, as Mason finds himself only average. "Welcome to the real world," says a professor.

The rude awakenings of adulthood are a common theme in the strip. One in which Mason is a champion speller in the second grade, only to gradually lose this seemingly magical ability by the time he gets to high school, bears a similarity to Fry's own life. "I was a really good speller in second grade, the best in the class, and I was given all these extra words to learn, hard ones like all the state capitals and the flowers. As I got older, that all evaporated. I'm a terrible speller now."

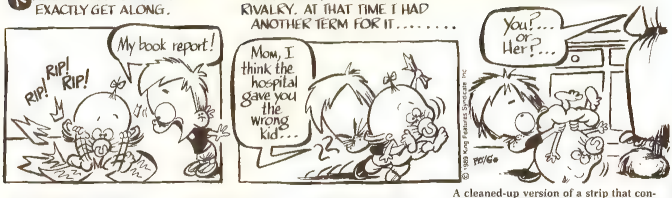
His own family had a multiple-divorce situation, which is not that far-fetched for modern families, but Fry says the strip isn't ready to tackle similar difficult issues. "I'm not ruling it out, but in the beginning, we don't want to turn people off. We want to get them into the strip before we hit them over the head with uncomfortable things. The comics, unlike TV or film, are a really delicate thing with readers. The strip appears every day, if we set them up for *Ozzie and Harriet* and then tinker with it and it all blows apart, the readers would get upset. We have to deal with these things gingerly. Look at *Bloom County*. [Berke Breathed] tried to do something different [*Outland*] and it just didn't work."

The biggest challenge for *When I Was Short* will be to introduce more difficult subject matter and still appeal to the masses. "Comics are still mired in the Dark Ages," Fry says. "I drew a strip in college about campus life. How do you do a college cartoon without sex or drugs or rock 'n' roll, unless you find a way to do it obliquely? It's difficult. Not like television, which has moved so far in what you can get away with. Garry Trudeau can do it, by virtue of his size. Comics are just entering the '60s, in terms of being matter-of-fact about things. The problem is that editors feel that


GRADE SCHOOL WAS A BREEZE.
Wow! Three smiley faces!
JR. HIGH: A PIECE OF CAKE.
A. Excellent.
HIGH SCHOOL WAS HIGHLY OVERRATED — AND COLLEGE WAS HIGHLY...
A+ Exceptional.
...ILLUMINATING.
Average?! Me, average?
Welcome to the real world.
© 1989 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
TRUDEAU

While most of Mason's adventures occur at age seven, the strip will show him at different points in his life as readers become more accustomed to the character.

All Short Strip Art: Copyright 1989, 1990 King Features Syndicate, Inc.


KATHLEEN AND I DIDN'T EXACTLY GET ALONG.
My book report!
RIP! RIP! RIP!
THEY NOW CALL IT SIBLING RIVALRY. AT THAT TIME I HAD ANOTHER TERM FOR IT.....
Mom, I think the hospital gave you the wrong kid...
"CLERICAL ERROR."
You!... or Her?...
© 1988 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
BEETLE BAILEY

A cleaned-up version of a strip that contained the ultimate no-no—toilet humor. The original's last caption read: "Flush the baby!"

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FRIEND, AND A GOOD FRIEND IS...
HEY, MASON!
... A GOOD FRIEND WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR.
You've got toilet paper stuck to your shoe, you've tucked your shirt into your underwear and there's some green stuff in between your teeth.
EDDIE WIBLICK WAS A REALLY GOOD FRIEND.
And your breath stinks, too.
Thanks.
MORGAN

"Comics are just entering the '60s," Fry notes ruefully and there are limits to what a new cartoonist can express.

there's no way a parent can censor the newspaper once it's in the home. I personally think people worry too much. Things are changing slowly, at the same rate they have always changed. At least it's comforting to see *Doonesbury* doing what it's doing. We have a tendency to think that everyone thinks the way we do. But most of the country is conservative and cautious. If all the world was New York and LA and even Houston, it would be OK, but it isn't. Above all, we want it to be a successful strip, and we have to compromise a little bit. I would like to not feel I couldn't talk about some things. I would like the strip to be so well regarded, it could handle that kind of backlash. Five years from now, I would like to push it a bit."

Sometimes, a strip will be rejected. "No toilet gags; they hate that kind of stuff," says Fry. One strip that will never see publication shows Mason with his baby sister, who has just ruined Mason's book report. "My sister and I didn't exactly get along," says the narrator. "Now I know it was sibling rivalry. At the time, I had another term for it." Mason holds the toddler over the toilet, and the caption announces: "Flush the Baby!"

Fry admits that at first, he was afraid *When I Was Short* didn't have enough of an edge to it—after all, this is a guy who is used to lampooning politics for a living, and about the only dangerous thing Mason does is to bring increasingly disgusting objects, like worms, to present to the teacher he has a crush on, until she screams and he realizes they were not meant for each other. "I had to wonder, 'Is this strip something I would even like?' But you work your way through the obvious ideas and get into more specific things. I'm liking and enjoying it more and more. I don't have a problem with it. Our major competition is *Calvin and Hobbes*, but I think it's a completely different strip. Calvin deals totally in fantasy, and Calvin is a very antagonistic character. Mason doesn't make things happen."

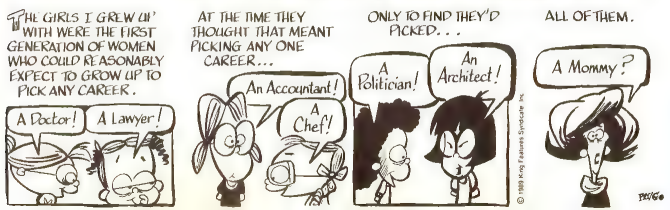
While he can cite no specific comic influences, he does remember listening to old Bill Cosby records as a kid, wherein Cosby would reminisce about his youth. "Maybe it's in my subconscious somewhere," he confesses. "This is essentially an adult strip. We're going after adults who fondly remember growing up, dealing with the irony of how they turned out versus how they grew up. Kids can enjoy the strip on a different level. They can't appreciate the irony, but they can get into Mason's adventures. If you take away the narration, there's a whole other cartoon in there."

Fry is reluctant to talk about the old days. "In junior high school, every day is a crisis," he remembers. "Basic insecurity, lack of confidence; as you get older, it gets easier."

He recalls the humiliation of seventh grade, when the gym teacher

(continued on page 66)

MOMS HAVE EXTREMELY SELECTIVE HEARING.
WHEN THEY WANT TO, THEY CAN HEAR A MOTH COUGH IN A NEIGHBORING STATE.
I heard that!
COUGH
WHEN THEY DON'T WANT TO, AN EXPLODING MICKEY MAN WARHEAD FALLS ON DEAF EARS.
B-But Jimmy has one ...and Brian has one...and if I don't get one
DIE!
MOMS ARE AN ENIGMA SHROUDED IN MYSTERY WRAPPED IN SARCASM.
Do you want an open or closed casket?
MORGAN


THE GIRLS I GREW UP WITH WERE THE FIRST GENERATION OF WOMEN WHO COULD REASONABLY EXPECT TO GROW UP TO PICK ANY CAREER.
A Doctor!
A Lawyer!
AT THE TIME THEY THOUGHT THAT MEANT PICKING ANY ONE CAREER...
An Accountant!
A Chef!
ONLY TO FIND THEY'D PICKED...
A Politician!
An Architect!
ALL OF THEM.
A Mommy?
© 1988 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
BEETLE BAILEY

SUPERPLANET... WHERE EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY IS SUPER! BUT, THEN, IF EVERYTHING IS SUPER, IS ANYTHING SUPER?! THINK ABOUT IT!
THINE SUPERSURFER FATHER IS SUCH A KLUTZ E'EN THOUGH HE DOTH DOETH SO MUCH BETTER WHEN HE DOTH SURFETH IN THE SKY, HE INSISTETH ON SURFING IN THE SURF!
Harvey Kurtz
again braves the bizarre, setting out on "Strange Adventures."
All Strange Adventures Art Layouts: Harvey Kurtzman Art: Dave Gibbons

Photo: Lawrence C. Beck

In this time of super-serious comic books, Harvey Kurtzman provides a much-needed alternative.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON & RANDY & JEAN-MARC LOFFICIER

The mad, mad world of Harvey Kurtzman has recently taken a turn for the strange. The comedy genius has returned to mainstream comics (well, as close as he ever gets) to introduce a new generation to *Harvey Kurtzman's Strange Adventures.*

This new hardcover edition, packaged by Byron Preiss and distributed by Marvel, teams Kurtzman with some of the finest creators in comics today, including Sergio Aragones, Rick Geary, Dave Gibbons and William Stout. The volume also includes a tribute by R. Crumb, an introduction by Art Spiegelman and a frontispiece by Moebius.

"I would like to see this particular book do something; I'm hoping that it has a new look," says Kurtzman. "I want it to advance the form a little bit. I always want to break the mold."

In fact, mold-breaking is a Kurtzman specialty, from his work on *Two-Fisted Tales* and creating *Mad* for EC in the '50s, to independent magazines like *Humbug, Trump* and *Help!* in the late '50s and early '60s, and his co-creation of *Little Annie Fanny* for *Playboy*. But Kurtzman is more keen to look to the future, as he describes how *Strange Adventures* came about.

"Byron Preiss wanted to do something with me, so I went back to a subject I've always been fond of—adventure," he reveals.

"We got a bunch of nice people doing this book, many people I'm very fond of. Sergio is one, and we got Bill Stout, Tomas Bunk." Even so, Kurtzman usually worked alone when he was putting the book together, which, he says, is the way he works best. Kurtzman did the writing and breakdowns and then turned the stories over to the individual artists ("I pretty much left them alone!"), although Kurtzman himself pencilled and inked "Drums Along the Schmohawk" and "Halloween."

"I'm really loath to get into too much personal back-and-forth. I've had enough of that. Working with situations where we play ping-pong—I do something, then they do something, I change this, and then they

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article, written by Kim Howard Johnson, is based on two separate interviews with Harvey Kurtzman: an unpublished talk conducted by Randy & Jean-Marc Lofficier in 1983 and a follow-up interview by Johnson in 1990.

Art: William Stout

THIS IS A STORY THAT HAPPENED LONG AGO... BEFORE TALKING WAS INVENTED...BEFORE RECORDED HISTORY... INDEED, BEFORE MEAT WERE INVENTED! WE HAVE THEREFORE BEEN FORCED TO TALK LIKE THIS! ...AND SO, OUR TALE BEGINS IN THE LAND OF GROOVY-GROOVY-GROOVY-

work until it's right.' It has a lot to do with my aging."

One of Kurtzman's first jobs in comics was a series of one-page filler gags for Atlas/Marvel called "Hey, Look!" "It was a humble job. Stan Lee was very generous. He couldn't give me any work to do because I wasn't conventional, and he didn't know what slot to put me in. So, he asked me to do these one-page fillers."

Kurtzman moved on to Bill Gaines and EC Comics, where he eventually settled into *Two-Fisted Tales*. "We had originally started our war books as adventure books. They were going to be 'he-men' adventures. Then, very conveniently, the Korean War came along, and we switched to a war magazine.

"Our position, I hasten to add, was always anti-war. We felt pretty bad about the business of fighting and killing, which I guess wasn't a terribly original position to take."

Recalls the writer/artist, "What particularly fueled us was the fact that it was fashionable to do war comics in terms of fantasy and glamor, which I thought was *awful*. God was always on our side, the Americans looked good, and the enemy looked bad; the stories that were written during World War II had the enemy always being inferior to us in every way. That just wasn't true. So, we took a stand, not a preachy stand, but that was our point-of-view when we wrote our material. It's much easier to do make-believe fantasy—to do a *Sgt. Rock* than an authentic war story.

"I don't keep up with comic books today, because they're essentially boring, with the exception of the oddballs that we know about, like Bob Crumb," Kurtzman confides. "I don't really know what's going on in comics right now. To me, at the core of what I like to do—and I don't always succeed—is that I would like to think of my work as being truthful. I can only go by certain instincts—sometimes I'm right, and sometimes I'm way off. I do the best I can. If I get some statement or element of truth, then I'm very happy. But the truth is what gives your material legitimacy and value."

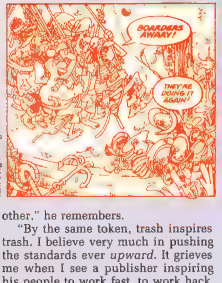
Kurtzman gives Bill Gaines much of the credit for what he was able to accomplish at EC. "He's a crazy man and a highly intelligent fellow," the writer/artist notes. "He really was the cause of everything that happened at EC, because he was the money man and had an unusual point-of-view. That's where it started. Then, along with Al Feldstein, he had a very nice habit of hiring good people. So, that's how we all came to be together. Then, we would interact with each other."

The atmosphere at EC fostered creativity, Kurtzman explains. "Everything is derivative, isn't it? Everything comes from something. For anyone that wants to be in the business, take heart. Copying is OK! The whole business of creativity comes from taking an existing 'A' and 'B' and putting them together and making 'C.'

"What happens is that good work inspires good work. We reacted on each other that way. We were in competition with each other. We got to be so good that we wanted to be better. It would be a bad mark in our books if we let everybody else down. So, that's the way we reacted on each

Have we seen the end of Kurtzman and Will Elder's *Playboy* heroine? "We're talking about there being a next *Annie Fanny*, but I don't know," he says.

Little Annie Fanny
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WHAT DO YOU WANT


BOARDERS AWAY!
THEY'RE GOING TO RAM US!!!
FINGERS!
CAPTAIN BLEEDY! THE MAN AHEAD IS RUNNING UP HIS WHITE SURRENDER FLAG! WE'VE WON THE DAY!
MR. SNIVEL GATHER THE BOOTY ON THE MAIN DECK!

Art: Sergio Aragones

other," he remembers.

"By the same token, trash inspires trash. I believe very much in pushing the standards ever *upward*. It grieves me when I see a publisher inspiring his people to work fast, to work hack, to work for the buck too religiously."

Another factor inspired creativity at EC. "Bill Gaines was available. That's very important. The head man was sitting right there; I could come to him any particular time of the day, tell him my problems and he would yell back. There was contact, there was communication. It's very important to communicate with your superiors if you're doing quality work."

While Kurtzman was doing *Two-Fisted Tales*, Gaines talked with him about doing a new humor comic, and the cartoonist found himself making the transition from war to laughter.

"The war books took a lot of research, and I was finally casting about for an *easier* way to make a living. The humor came easy. I had done it all my life through high school, so when I looked for a format, that's what I came up with. It worked, it was successful right from the beginning," he says, adding that he decided to call the new book *Mad*.

"A title has a way of taking on the personality of the magazine. *Mad*, on paper, looked like just another sound, but once the magazine took on a character of its own, it invested the title with its own magic. You always search for a short title, and a title that *means* something to you."

There was no one inspiration for *Mad*, nor a single major influence on his humor. "I wasn't inspired by a particular cartoonist so much," Kurtzman says. "I was inspired by all cartoonists. The inspiration of college magazines, which are now a thing of the past, is what led to *Mad*. We actually put them out of business, innocently enough. I got hold of a few as a kid, and they were so different, so wild, so irreverent and so unique back then, in 1954 and earlier. If I'm forced to zero in, that's where I got my inspiration from, but so many things were inspiring."

After *Mad*, Kurtzman continued exploring the satirical landscape in the early '60s with *The Jungle Book* and *Goodman Beaver*. Both projects are currently available, along with other Kurtzman works, in Kitchen Sink Press editions.

I've got to ask Alison to do us gals more pop thing.
Whoa! Wait! That movement in my shoulder is why I'm sticking here!
Aah! Wait! No more! My elbow is crooked! It's gone forever! It's a freak!
Hurry up and get all of his stuff! Then we'll shadow him!
While Gallagher's A nervous twitch is starting in my pinky
Art: By & Copyright 1959, 1988 Harvey Kurtzman

Since the early days of *Mad*, Kurtzman himself has gone on to inspire a whole generation himself, particularly Robert Crumb, "and to a certain extent, many of the major underground cartoonists."

In addition to the artists who went on to create the underground comix of the '60s, Kurtzman inspired and hired, as his assistant, an aspiring cartoonist and college humor magazine editor who went on to direct movies. Terry Gilliam followed an assistant editor named Gloria Steinem (who also went on to other things) on Kurtzman's *Help!* magazine in the early 1960s.

"Terry is a very talented guy, talented in the business that he finally ended up in—movies, which we never anticipated," Kurtzman remarks. The future Monty Python member was hired following his college graduation, when he turned up in New York. "We got along. He was such a pleasant presence."

"It's better than anything Sergio [Aragones] has ever done," says Kurtzman of "Captain Bleed."

In addition to Gilliam and Steinem, Kurtzman has worked with a number of people well known to comics fans. The late, legendary Wally Wood he categorizes as "burned out. He was a classic burn-out. That's what I remember about Wally Wood: He worked too hard." Of John Severin, he recalls that "to me, he did his best work when we were corresponding in high school. He would decorate the envelopes when we sent each other letters, and he was as good an artist back then as he is today."

Friend and longtime collaborator Will Elder, Kurtzman calls "a naturally funny man. Humor came to him like breathing." Kurtzman considers *Spirit* creator Will Eisner "a highly intelligent cartoonist—you can't even call him a cartoonist. He was practically a lawyer. He had a lawyer's mind and a lawyer's intelligence. A remarkable man." And he characterizes Hugh Hefner, an off-and-on associate for 30 years, as "a genius. He has so many talents, he's in the genius class in my mind."

Kurtzman refers to EC's Al Feldstein as "a good businessman," but has more lavish words for Bill Gaines.

To him, Gaines was "a renegade publisher who was able to create renegade circumstances that gave young aspiring cartoonists the opportunity to be creative."

Rebel though it was, *Mad* emerged as EC's only successful survivor when parents, politicians and educators began their attacks on comic books in the '50s. Kurtzman says that while he can understand the emotions some of those groups may have felt, he still opposes what they did.

"I went through the period of censorship, when the censors came in and changed the face of comic books. There were good reasons for objections to be made for what the comics were doing. At the same time, I dislike censorship intensely, and things get really dumb when censorship comes in. I don't like to see anything censored, but I can understand the problems that generate their growth.

"There doesn't seem to be any boldness in comic books today. There are a lot of pretty wild things going on in movies, television and radio," he comments. "There is an element in the media that's unusually bold. That element doesn't exist in comic strips or newspaper cartoons, but it exists in radio and TV."

After he left *Mad*, Kurtzman had to create his own renegade circum-

(continued on page 68)

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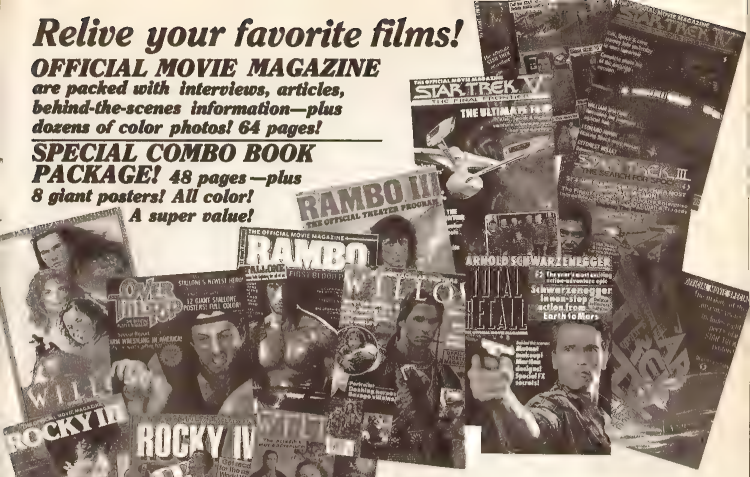

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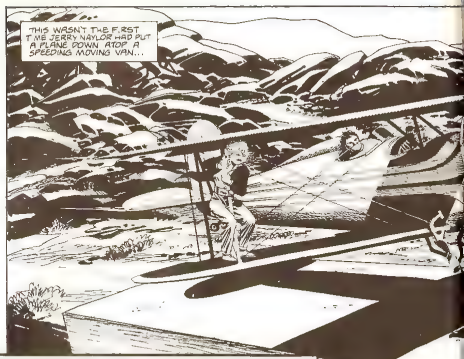
Hooray for Hollywood!

For Mark Evanier, reel life is just another setting for comic action.

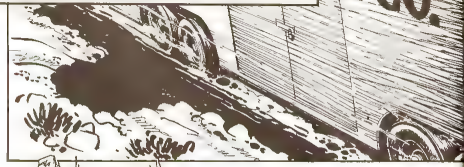
By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL



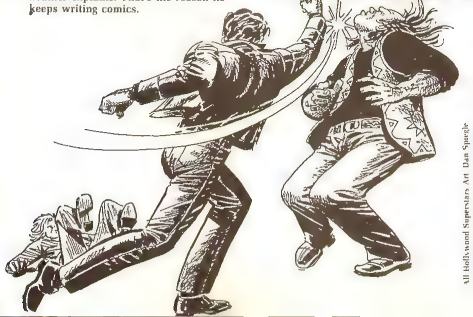
It's real easy to play it safe these days," says comic book writer Mark Evanier. "It's easy to do monsters and violence and dark superhero things."

Never one to take the easy way out, Evanier is instead launching a series for Epic Comics called *Hollywood Superstars*, the adventures of a three-person detective agency that specializes in work for Los Angeles' movie and TV studios. It's a milieu that Evanier—who has worked in television for two decades—knows well, and one he has explored in comics before, in the pages of Eclipse's *Crossfire*.

"This is the story of three people—maybe more as the issues go on—who are on the periphery of the Hollywood movie industry that I know so well. They are Jerry Naylor, a former movie stunt coordinator who gave it up when he worked on a film where the director ignored his warnings and too many people got killed; Leo Haney, an aspiring stand-up comedian and impressionist, with the fastest mind in all Hollywood; and Melody Blake, an aspiring actress/model. She has come to Hollywood from back East and writes these very long, sad letters to her mother that we will read occasionally. Melody becomes their secretary and girl Friday in the Hollywood Superstars agency. It deals with film- and TV-related cases; there actually are several of these operations around in real life, places the studios call when they need detective work done, who have some discretion and knowledge of the business."



"Comic books are much more fun than TV, because you can do what you like," Evanier explains. That's the reason he keeps writing comics.



All Hollywood Superstars Art: Dan Spiegle

Like many of the stories in *Crossfire*, the plots in *Hollywood Superstars* will be based on real-life incidents. "The storylines will be based on things I know happened in real life," Evanier notes. "I am a repository for show business trivia—backstage stories, things told to me by crew, by people who worked on shows, things that happened on

LAWSON
MOVING CO.
...BUT IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THE CAMERAS WEREN'T ROLLING WHEN HE DID IT. AND IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THE VAN'S DRIVER DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING...

All Characters & Art: Copyright 1990 Mark Evanier & Dan Spiegle

shows I did. I accrue all this. If the bottom ever falls out of the comic book business, I'm going to open a blackmail service," he laughs, "and go where the *real* money is."

The incidents that Evanier uses as a basis for his writing didn't always happen to *him*; often they've come to him second- or even third-hand.

"In Hollywood, there's a certain level of truth that's more like legend," Evanier says. "There are stories you hear about certain people—there's one someone told me the other day about a singing star. I had heard it three or four times before, once about Diana Ross, once about Natalie Cole, once about Aretha Franklin. It's *obviously* a lie, at least all but one of these times," he laughs again.

"But it really doesn't matter who it was, it's a nice little story. It may be completely apocryphal, but it may find its way into a comic book of mine one of these days. It's the Hollywood equivalent of the urban myth."

Sometimes, Evanier admits, he feels like a prophet after stories he has made up come true. "I did a series of stories about a team of guys who dressed up like the Marx Brothers to rob banks, and six months later, it was happening! I have the clippings here. I did a two-parter in *Crossfire* about Marilyn Monroe's diary and eight months later, the FBI revealed they were tracking Marilyn Monroe's diary the same way I had postulated."

But in a market flooded with the "easy stories" that Evanier decries, how did he ever sell *Hollywood Superstars*? The instigator, he reveals, was Archie Goodwin, former editor of Epic Comics.

"Archie came up to me at a convention and told me how much he enjoyed *Crossfire*," Evanier recalls. "He said, 'I would love to have a book in the Epic line based on the Hollywood things you do. The world needs this kind of comic book.' I said OK, and that's how *Hollywood Superstars* got started. Of course, by the time the book came to be, Archie had gone to DC."

The artist on *Hollywood Superstars* is Evanier's frequent collaborator, Dan Spiegle, a man the writer seems unable to stop praising.

"Dan is my favorite collaborator.

Investigating, the Hollywood Superstars will discover that in Hollywood, fact is more startling than fiction.

and my favorite artist from long before I thought I could work with him," Evanier enthuses. "He happens to have a flair for this subject matter, because there's nobody in this business who draws real places better, who sets scenes the way he does. The book lends itself to what he does best. It's a natural combination."

Another factor Spiegle lends to the team is speed, according to Evanier, yet it's a speed that doesn't sacrifice quality.

"I'm spoiled rotten when it comes to comic book artists: Working with Dan and with Sergio Aragones [on *Groo*] and Jack Kirby, I get *horrified* if

Melody Blake becomes a Method actress with a dramatic leap in her role in the Hollywood Superstars agency.

a guy can't draw three pages a day," he confesses. "Dan turns in the pages to me and they sit at my house for a couple of weeks, while every artist I know comes by to look at them. He's a real favorite of many professional artists. He's professional and he draws a world that's believable."

Evanier remembers one favorite sequence from the *Crossfire* series: a five-page car chase. "Car chases are not done in comics much because you can't hear the tires squeal," he chuckles. "And because 85 percent of even the great comic book artists couldn't pull it off. They couldn't draw the car from enough different angles and keep the perspective straight and get the feeling of movement from what is essentially a stationary medium. Dan did it without putting speed lines in. Dave Stevens came over and had his jaw hanging open in amazement. I get that reaction a lot from Dan's work. It's not flashy, he's not a show-off kind of artist, but I've never found anyone who brings so much to the

page in terms of telling you who the characters are and where they are."

And Spiegle brings other qualities to the job as well, qualities that can make the writer's job much easier. Evanier comments: "We work full script because Dan needs to know *everything* about a person in order to draw them. If I'm working on a basic superhero story with an artist working from a plot, I can say, 'This character is fat.' He'll draw a fat person and I'll add the characterization in the dialogue. With Dan, the characterization is in the person's face, the way they dress, their gestures."

So, Archie Goodwin and his successors at Epic were willing to take a chance on a group of non-costumed

Coordinating this fiery gag with former stuntman Jerry Naylor is writer Mark Evanier's "favorite artist" Dan Spiegle.

"Part of the reason costumed characters are the top sellers is that none of the other companies have offered much else," notes Evanier.

heroes. But Evanier is positive that a significant number of readers will also take that chance. "Part of the reason costumed characters are the top sellers is that none of the companies have offered much else; so, they have to be the top sellers," he notes. "Heinz Ketchup is the bestselling ketchup, because in many markets, that's all they carry. I think we've reached a point where just wearing a costume doesn't mean anything; there are too many of those around. The readers are getting hip to the fact that superheroes have been done 125 different ways; there's a desire out there for something different. In the case of *Crossfire*, anybody who bought the book thinking, 'I want a superhero book,' was probably disappointed. We didn't do a superhero comic. We disguised it as such occasionally and maybe that got some people to pick up their first issue. That's not enough anymore. I give credit to the people at Marvel for being willing to fund a gamble like *Hollywood Superstars*."

When he and Aragones began another offbeat title, Evanier remembers it was also heralded as an unsuccessful attempt. "When we started *Groo*, everybody told us there was *no* market for humor. They told us nobody wants to read a funny comic, they want superheroes. We got very negative reaction to *Groo* for the first four or five issues from dealers and wholesalers, saying, 'I love it, but my customers won't buy it.' I just turned in *Groo* #72; we must be doing something right.

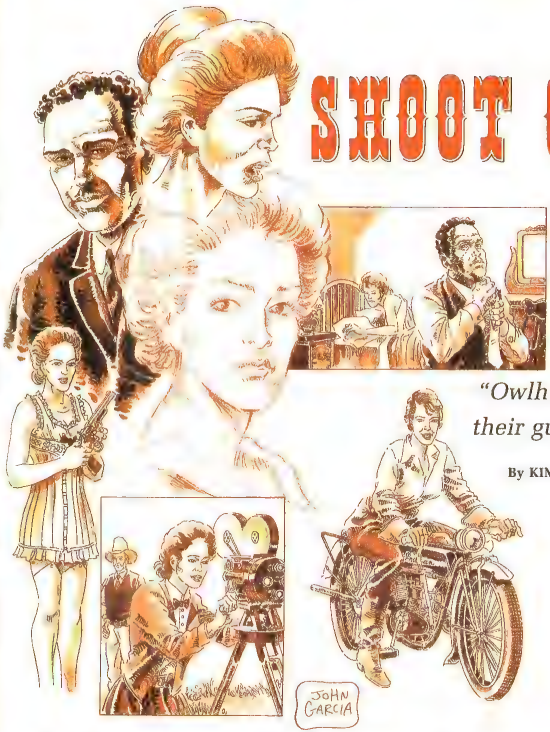
"At this point, I think there's a market for *any* book people enjoy if it gets sampled," he remarks. "If people try *Hollywood Superstars* and they don't like it, that's fine. My big fear right now is that, if it doesn't cross over with 38 other superhero titles, and buying comics has gotten so expensive lately, it won't get sampled. There are two kinds of failures in this world: the failure that never had a chance and the failure that did. It's frustrating to be the failure that didn't have a chance."

Evanier is still working in television as well, notably as one of two writers on the CBS Saturday morning series *Garfield and Friends*. Given the higher salaries in Hollywood, why does he continue to write comics?

"Comic books are much more fun than TV, because you can do what you like," he responds. "I get a lot of

(continued on page 68)

SHOOT OUTS



Back when the West wasn't that wild, a couple of "Owlhoots" drew their guns for reel.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Although the Old West hasn't been seen much in comic books recently, the creator of *Kings in Disguise* has a powerful hankerin' to show current fans what they've been missin'.

At the same time, though, with Kitchen Sink's *Owlhoots*, the emphasis is on the *Old* West—the last days of the American frontier, with a Hollywood-style twist.

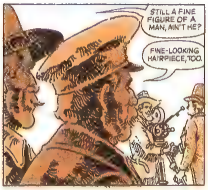
"*Owlhoots* was an idea I had when I was 14, which is a *long* time ago now," laughs Jim Vance, a native of Oklahoma. "I was reading about some local history, about some federal marshals who used to work out of Judge Parker's court in Fort Smith. I was interested in that because I had a great-grandfather who was a deputy marshal of Judge Parker's.

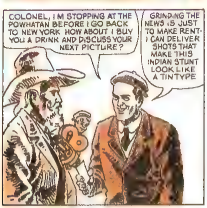
"I was reading some books in hopes of reading something about my great-grandfather. I never did, but I ran into some information about some of the better-known federal marshals who, in their older days, made an autobiographical picture about themselves. They made a silent movie about 1916 or 1917—they were all in their 60s, but they played themselves. They found a few paroled outlaws who were also in their 60s to play themselves, and some other people to play the folks whom they had put in Boot Hill."

Vance admits he was fascinated at the thought of these real-life Wild West figures joining together to create a filmed document of their lives, and tried to track down the movie.

"I finally located a copy of it in the Library of Congress. I went to Washington and went to their film department, and they said, 'Yes, we have it, and we're afraid to open the can!' So, as far as we know, the only copy in existence is probably going to explode the first time it's exposed to air," he says of the one-of-a-kind treasure which, like so many irreplaceable early movies, is on highly unstable and combustible nitrate stock.

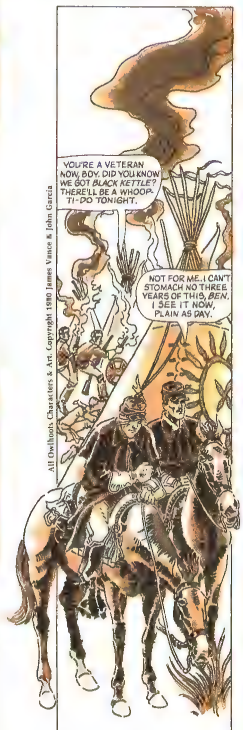
"It's a real shame—I hate knowing




COLONEL, I'M STOPPING AT THE POWHATAN BEFORE I GO BACK TO NEW YORK. HOW ABOUT I BUY YOU A DRINK AND DISCUSS YOUR NEXT PICTURE?
GRINDING THE NEWS IS JUST TO MAKE RENT. I CAN DELIVER SHOTS THAT MAKE THIS INDIAN STUNT LOOK LIKE A TINTYPE

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE SPOOFIN' IT SO. BEN, HE DONE A HONEST JOB TELLIN' HIS STORY. AND IT'S IMPORTANT, AIN'T IT? THAT PEOPLE DON'T FORGET
MM-HM.

***Owlhoots*, based partially on fact, recalls those yesteryears through the eyes of old cowhands seeking celluloid immortality.**


YOU'RE A VETERAN NOW, BOY. DID YOU KNOW WE GOT BLACK KETTLE? THERE'LL BE A WHOOP-TI-DO TONIGHT.
NOT FOR ME. I CAN'T STOMACH NO THREE YEARS OF THIS, BEN. I SEE IT NOW, PLAIN AS DAY.
All Owlhoots Characters & Art. Copyright 1980 James Vance & John Garcia

that happened. But there are a few pieces of film that exist that are predecessors to it. They were involved in a couple of films that outside people had done in the area, so they're still around; the Library of Congress has those. I watched those, and that gave me the flavor of what they had done. It's such unsophisticated filmmaking! They would show a bank robbery by setting up a camera outside the bank in one of these small towns, and you never see what's going on inside! You don't see them robbing it—it's very primitive filmmaking. They walk inside, and a couple of minutes later, they come back out and get on the horses and ride away! It's like a travelogue of this small town. At that time, Oklahoma in 1915 looked like the Old West. You see people walking down the sidewalks, and a dog passed out in the middle of the street..."

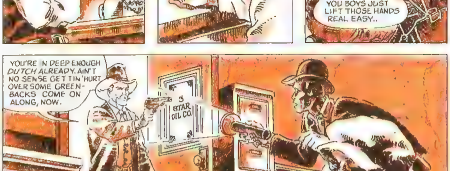
Although he was working as a playwright, and his first comics work was based on one of his plays, Vance saw that the comics medium was perfect for presenting the story of *Owlhoots*.

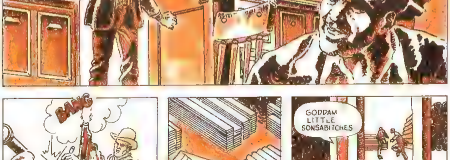
"It was something that I had wanted to do for a long time. *Kings in Disguise* had been a play—I've written plays for years—but *Owlhoots* couldn't be done as a play. You couldn't get that many horses on stage," laughs Vance. "And you couldn't get actors to walk around after the horses had been there!

"I didn't know what to do with it. It either had to be done with a camera, or, once I discovered what we could do with *Kings in Disguise*, then comics became another option. I was visiting Kitchen Sink Press a couple of years ago, and I mentioned it to Dave Schreiner, the editor, and he was interested enough to ask me to write it up. It was really an off-the-top-of-my-head proposal at the time. We wrote it up, played with the characters, and they decided to go with it!"

Owlhoots is based on true incidents, but Vance says more than the names have been changed for the limited series.

"Virtually *nothing* that happens to





While some Western buffs may see similarities between the *Owlhoots* characters and certain real lawmen of the Indian and Oklahoma territories, the story has no true historical origin.

the main characters happened historically. The main historical bits that it's based on are the fact that there were some old lawmen who had been celebrities in their day who are well past their prime, and some of them simply didn't want to let go of the glory days; there's one fellow who wants to build a monument to himself by making a film.

"I moved it back chronologically a few years to 1914 for several reasons. Buffalo Bill Cody had made an autobiographical film that was released that year, but it wasn't shown much of anywhere—just Washington D.C. and a couple of other cities. There's a theory today—and there's no one alive who can dispute it, so we don't know now—that the film was suppressed by the War Department because Cody told a little too much truth in his autobiography. The film is called *The Indian Wars*, and he got federal backing from the War Department, which gave him soldiers and material, because they thought it would be great for recruitment. Of course in 1914, they were starting to think that maybe we *should* have some guys in the Army because of what was going on in Europe.

"It turned out not to be a very good recruiting device, because it didn't make the Army look very good by most accounts. So, the film was supposedly suppressed. But we were able to set it up so that McAlester, our lead character, sees the thing while he's in Washington and gets the idea 'This is how I can be remembered,' because he's pretty obscure at this point. He does find the funding, and takes off from there to put the thing on himself.

"One other reason I wanted to set it in 1914 is because those were the final days of the Patents Trust. The Edison Company and some of the other filmmaking companies had patented all of the filmmaking equipment in this country, and you had to pay them a cut in order to use it. There were many wildcat operations that were making films illegally, because they didn't want to pay the Edison Company. As a matter of fact, that's one reason why moviemaking in California became popular, because they wanted to get away from the Edison private eyes and go out where they couldn't be found. So, they went across the continent!

"The former lawmen have become outlaws of a different kind. They're probably no more or less innocent than some of the people they themselves had to kill or put in jail once upon a time, who were compelled to be what they were out of circumstances beyond their control.

"These guys don't even realize they're breaking the law at the beginning. They've got a cameraman who knows, but that's OK—that's what he does for a living! He's a wildcat filmmaker."

Vance enjoyed cowboy shows as a youngster, but he wasn't a particular fan of the true West.

"Well, I grew up in a time when you could see Roy Rogers and Dale Evans every Saturday, but the real West—no," he smiles. "I was intrigued when I was 10 years old at what my great-grandfather had done—he had actually been involved in the captures of men whose names you could find in history books. I never knew the man, but my father quoted him as saying, 'You had to be just as big a thug as the guys you were bringing in.' You had to be willing to, for instance, drag a guy face down on a dry creek bed to get information out of him. It's one thing to say, but think about what happens to a guy when you do that. They captured one fellow, and the posse was so afraid of him, they held him down and shot him in both arms—they broke *both* his arms so he wouldn't kill the entire posse. And they thought this was OK. This was police procedure and how they got back alive with the guy so they could hang him!" he laughs. "It was a different mindset at the time.

"There'll be nobody facing each other off down the street like in a B movie, because that *never* happened," says Jim Vance.

"There were many people hanging out in the middle of nowhere, and we're talking about a place that was opened up with land runs, which is what's interesting to me about it. It's not that I'm from Oklahoma and I want to write a story about Oklahoma; I don't find much of modern-day Oklahoma very interesting. But this particular part of history, where this was the last free land on this part of the continent that American citizens were entitled to, they were fighting and killing each other for it. What little bit they could hold onto was very precious to them. There were some strange things happening out there in the middle of nowhere—people building these little lean-tos and trying to hang onto what they had managed to get, simply by virtue of having a faster horse than the other guy."

Although the Western may be making a mini-comeback in comics (with *Honkytonk Sue*, *Owlhoots* and *The Wild Wild West*), the genre involves some inherent problems. Explains Vance: "I have access to too many easy answers in a Western. If you don't like somebody, you can simply shoot him! I'm trying not to do any more of that than I have to. Violence is part of these guys' lives, and I have to deal with that, but I'm trying to look at the things you don't *ordinarily* see.

"There was a Western comic that came out recently that I won't name, but obviously, the idea behind the writing was that the fellow who wrote it had just discovered that maybe these weren't very nice people back then. We should take it for granted that these people were probably no nicer than they are now—the Roy Rogers idea doesn't necessarily apply to reality. The thing about this one is, the scenes that are true Western scenes in *Owlhoots* are all flashbacks, things remembered by the characters, because it's a 1914 story. It's about people who *used* to be cowboys and at least one that would still like to be."

All Owlhoots Art: John Garcia/Courtesy Kitchen Sink Press

Vance said it seemed silly not to use flashbacks with the type of story he was telling. "Since the whole thing is about someone trying to recapture his past, when you can see what that was, and measure the reality against the way he remembers it..."

Owlhoots will have a different look than other comics thanks to a unique method seldom employed in the medium. Although using a duotone effect was not his decision, he was delighted with the idea.

The title underwent a change in artists as well, when intended penciller Jack Jackson had to step aside for another project. "Denis Kitchen had just received art from a man named John Garcia, who was pitching him an idea for a Western series—it came in almost the same day that Jack told us he couldn't do the book. We found out that John specializes in sepia work, and they put figures together and found out that it could be done. They thought it would give the book a different, yet appropriate look for a period piece like this."

Although a comic book as different as *Owlhoots* may be a harder sell to some fans, Vance says there are elements in his world that would certainly appeal to fans of *X-Men*.

"I think the things that appeal to *X-Men* readers are the character and soap opera aspects, and if that's the

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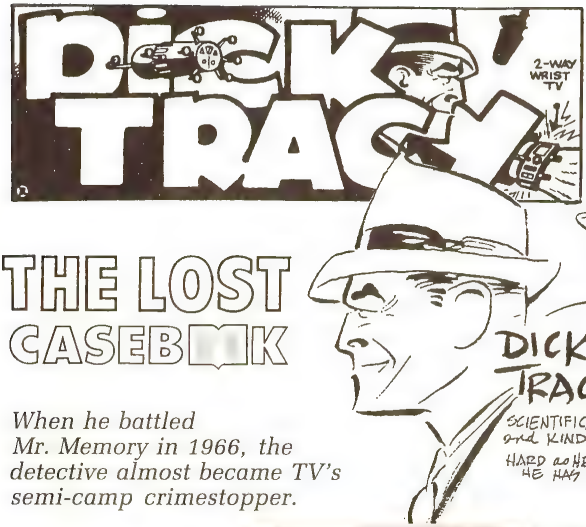


THE LOST CASEBOOK

When he battled Mr. Memory in 1966, the detective almost became TV's semi-camp crimestopper.

By DUANE S. ARNOTT

Dick Tracy got a second shot at live-action television in 1966 in the immediate wake of the unprecedented success of the *Batman* TV series. William Dozier of Greenway Productions, with *Batman* and *The Green Hornet* in action, was one of TV's hottest producers.

In order to capitalize on its own success, Greenway sought the rights to produce *The Green Hornet*, *Wonder Woman*, *Superman* and *Dick Tracy* for television shortly after *Batman* became a hit. First off the mark was *Green Hornet*, which sold without a pilot and began airing in September 1966.

At that time, Henry Saperstein, owner of UPA, the makers of Mr. Magoo and an early 1960s animated *Dick Tracy* series (now available from Paramount Home Video), still had an option on the *Dick Tracy* property. So, Greenway negotiated with strip creator Chester Gould and Saperstein to make a new TV series based on the famous detective comic strip. Prior to this, there had been a short-lived

To aid the producers in their casting, Chester Gould provided sketches and notes on his characters. Broadway soap actor Ray MacDonnell fit Tracy's profile.

All Dick Tracy Sketch Art: Chester Gould/Courtesy Greenway Productions

series in the early 1950s starring serial Tracy Ralph Byrd (CS #14).

In early July 1966, Greenway executives met with Gould. Out of their meeting, Greenway produced a seven-page TV format, a "bible" for the proposed *Tracy* series.

Gould wrote these comments to Dozier in a letter after receiving a copy of the format. "I have every confidence this project will be every bit as rewarding as you plan it. Our agreement on using *real* people and not cartoon-made-up actors was a great step.

"I feel impelled to mention that the 35 years of presenting *Dick Tracy* have made our readers very aware of details. I would suggest that your researchers check all basic background situations as they arise to prevent unfortunate incongruities which *could* react on the film or the strip." Gould reminded Dozier he was only a phone call away if info was needed.

In the "bible," many parameters for the series were set. Our hero was "the complete detective, student of science and inventor of crime detection devices." His wife of 11 years, Tess Trueheart, was his companion and sounding board. She would *never* show him her concern over his danger-fraught life. "Nor will she or Tracy ever discuss the perils of work with Bonnie Braids, their eight-year-old daughter, the apple of their eyes." Dick Tracy Jr. was described as a young lad adopted by the Tracys who strongly admired the detective.

Tracy's boss, the incorruptible Chief Pat Patton of the *Metropolis* police is smart, tough, practical and a good administrator. He has the highest esteem for Tracy but "would never tell him to his face." Next to Tracy, Sam Catchem is most respected by Chief Patton. Catchem, a fearless cop, works closely with Tracy on many a caper.

Patton is equally high on Lizz, the beauty-with-brains policewoman who alternates with Catchem on cases.

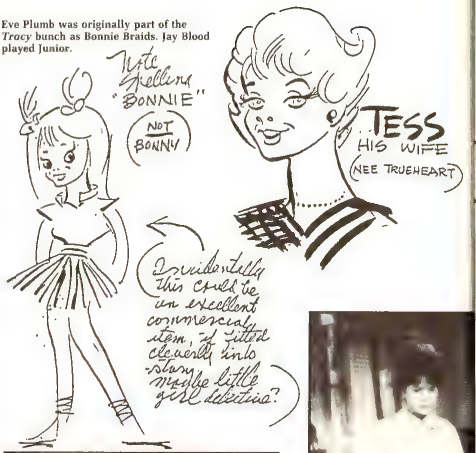
After the series' characters were described, the format detailed the villains: "The master criminals who paraded through the many episodes of the Tracy saga have all come to untimely deaths. And therefore, new arch-villains *must* be created in the mold of those who have come and gone."

These new baddies wouldn't be as bizarre as Gould's grotesqueries. "It is not our purpose to make them the triumph of the skill of makeup artists," the series bible noted. "They will have definite bizarre characteristics, but be relatively normal in the sense of their physiognomy. Each will have a henchman, who is his confidant, executioner, and who, of course, will come to the same sorry end as his employer."

Among the bad guys intended for the series were: The Quick Change Artist—wears break-away clothing. Continuous change of disguises enables quick getaways. His aide, "F-Sharp," always punctuates his speech with a "hmmmnn?" in the key of F sharp.

The Wizard of Odds—calculates odds of everything, never takes a

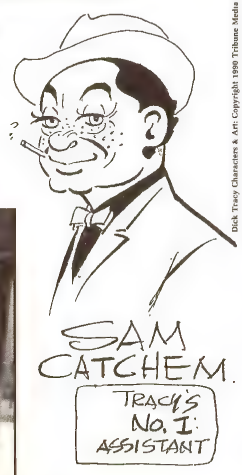
Eve Plumb was originally part of the *Tracy* bunch as Bonnie Braids. Jay Blood played Junior.


Wife spelling "BONNIE"
NOT BONNY
TESS
HIS WIFE
(NEE TRUEHEART)
Incidentally this could be an excellent commercial item, if tilted cleverly into story. Maybe little girl detective?

All Dick Tracy TV Photos Copyright 1966 Greenway Productions

All TV Photos American Heritage Center/Courtesy Dustie S. Arnett

The pilot introduced all the crime scene regulars including policewoman Lizz (Jan Shutan), Chief Patton (Ken Mayer), Tracy (MacDonnell) and Sam Catchem (Monroe Arnold, kneeling). Gould was pleased that they chose to use "*real* people and not cartoon-made-up actors."



Dick Tracy Characters & Art: Copyright 1990 Tracy Media Services

chance unless odds are in his favor. His henchman, "Hypo," takes a different pill every five seconds.

Gargles—gargles continuously because he's convinced hazardous germs abound in the air. "Needles," his sidekick, knits sweaters, afghans, etc. wherever he can.

It's interesting to note that Greenway basically planned to follow the successful formula the company had used in *Batman*, something they *didn't* implement in making *The Green Hornet*.

Charles FitzSimons, William Dozier's assistant at Greenway in its heyday, says, "Our intention was a stylized but *not* camp version of *Dick Tracy*. We thought it had a great future because of the villains. The thing that was parlayed in *Batman* really were the villains, and *Dick Tracy* gave us an opportunity to do the same thing. It would have had famous villains who would repeat, like *Batman*. However, instead of doing 'camp,' we would be doing a 'period,' as it were."

FitzSimons makes it clear that they planned a contemporary Tracy, explaining what he means by "period" and the effect they were trying to create. "We were going to do *Dick Tracy*, again, in a *stylized* fashion. We wanted to do it along the style of acting prevalent in the 1930s. It was a slightly overacted type of acting, it would amuse rather than frighten people."

The series' bible states that gadgets would be used sparingly and never for their own sake, only as ingenious aids to solving the crimes. In practice, though, the Greenway execs wanted to go all out in creating new devices for Tracy. The detective's two-way wrist radio was now, as it had become in the strip, a two-way *television*. "We were going the whole route," FitzSimons says. "We had a wonderful automobile with a moon-shaped rollbar which went around the outside of the car so the auto was capable of doing a complete rollover and righting itself on its wheels.

"We had the Batmobile, we had the Dick Tracy car, just like we had the Batbelt, we had the two-way wrist television. Batman had his Batcave and Dick had his lab that had special bulletproof windows which closed like the iris of a camera. It was very interesting and stylized. Had it gone, it would have gone the same route as *Batman* but *not* camp."

The crimes that Dick Tracy would solve wouldn't be minor heists but super-plots, audacious and grandiose schemes that, like the James Bond films of the era, would hold the future of the world or the nation at stake. If it were a robbery, it would have to be spectacular, such as the seizure of a plane in midflight carrying millions of dollars or the robbery of a mint.

FitzSimons recalls casting was done keeping the desired style and Gould's sketches in mind. "We were looking for somebody who would look like the comic strip Tracy, who would have the chin and the nose and who would look right with the hat. And we wanted somebody who would perform in the style of a Jimmy Cagney or a Pat O'Brien. We wanted to have it in that 'old movie' style. I had looked at half the actors in Hollywood. It was funny because I would stick a hat on each one to see what he would look like. I had a permanent hat in my office.

"We were about to do some tests and I wasn't satisfied with anyone. Then out of the blue, Ray MacDonnell, a Broadway soap actor, arrived in Los Angeles for a weekend or something, and his agent had heard about it and Ray came out to my office. I stuck the hat on his head and I thought, 'Oh my gosh, we've got it!'

Tracy's beat would involve James Bond-like world threats. He would fight them with the aid of Lizz (Shutan) and an arsenal which included a Tracymobile.

A familiar face from TV's *Batman* appears in the *Tracy* pilot: Victor Buono as the living computer Mr. Memory. With his right hand man, Hook (Alan Jaffe). Memory schemes to shanghai foreign dignitaries.

He's apparently a very successful actor in New York today, so it didn't do him any harm."

Young Eve Plumb, a child actress who had done commercials from age six and went on to do *The Brady Bunch*, was cast as Bonnie Braids Tracy. FitzSimons recalls, "It was the first thing that Eve Plumb ever did. We also had a young man, Jay Blood, who looked just like the comics' Dick Tracy Jr."

Chief Patton was played by character actor Ken Mayer, best known for his regular role as Major Robbie Robertson in the early 1950s series *Space Patrol*. Davey (*Cult of the Damned*) Davison played Tess with Jan Shutan, who had a lead role in the 1974 series *Sons & Daughters*, as Lizz.

In the pilot episode, "Mr. Memory," Tracy encountered a new villain. Utilizing the most scientific computers, Mr. Memory digests every bit of information needed for a crime. By means of an EEG-like device clamped to his head and linked by wires plugged into his computers, the information is stored in his brain's memory bank.

FitzSimons recalls, "The villain was played by the late Victor Buono, a very big, heavy actor who played King Tut on *Batman*. He was a young man who looked twice his age and weighed more than 300 pounds."

Mr. Memory's manservant, Hook, gets his name from the old-fashioned pirate hook artificial limb. Seems one day at feeding time, he got too close to Mr. Memory's piranha.

Hook was played by the late Alan Jaffe. "At that time, Alan Jaffe was one of my favorite character actors," says FitzSimons. "He had a very limited career because he had a bad case of emphysema, but he had a wonderful face and was a fine villain performer. His role was reminiscent of Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*."

The pilot was written by Hal Fimberg and directed by Larry Peerce, the son of the great opera singer Jan Peerce. "He went on to become a respected director in the creative sense in this town," says FitzSimons. Peerce's later credits include *The Other Side of the Mountain*, *Two Minute Warning* and *Wired*.

Dick Tracy's producer was James Fonda, who had worked with Dozier producing two other TV adaptations from comics, *Hazel* and *Dennis the Menace*.

All the characters were introduced in *Dick Tracy*'s first episode. The story began as Mr. Memory kidnapped the ambassadors of England, France and Italy during a secret meeting of NATO. With the future of America's most important alliances at stake, Dick Tracy is called in.

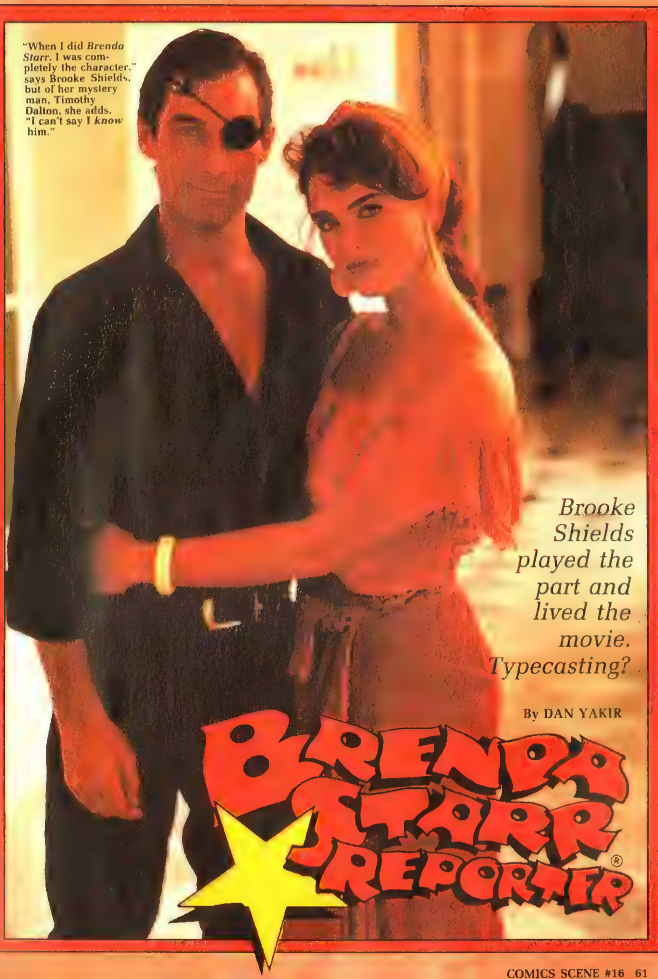
In a confrontation with the kidnappers, Hook dies, hoist with his own petard, in a battle with Tracy. When Tracy tracks Mr. Memory to his lair, the detective substitutes the computer tapes with his own, containing high, piercing squeals, and literally sounds the villain to defeat.

Whatever happened to the show? Octogenarian William Dozier recalls, "I was in the midst of *Batman* and I had *Green Hornet* on. I was so snowed under with stuff that, unfortunately, I didn't give much attention to this pilot.

"We made the pilot and the network *didn't* pick it up. *Nobody* bought it. I don't think it was quite far out enough. I don't know. I think *Dick Tracy* died a natural death."

FitzSimons says, "What had happened is we had made *Batman* and it was an enormous smash and *The Green Hornet* was very successful except that they objected to the violence of Bruce Lee and the kung fu. At that time, there were many copycat shows done on different networks and they felt the live-action comic strip had run its course."

FitzSimons doesn't want the Greenway project compared to Warren Beatty's *Dick Tracy*. "They had a hell of a lot more money than we had and a lot more latitude since we were doing it for television. We were hoping to repeat what we had done with *Batman* and come up with an enormously successful series. We weren't out to do what they did with the *Batman* feature. We wanted kids from seven to 70 to look at *Dick Tracy*." Says Charles FitzSimons, "We were out to entertain."


"When I did *Brenda Starr*, I was completely the character," says Brooke Shields, but of her mystery man, Timothy Dalton, she adds, "I can't say I *know* him."

Brooke Shields played the part and lived the movie. Typecasting?

By DAN YAKIR

BRENDA STARR REPORTER®

She was the world's most famous child before becoming one of the world's most recognized—perhaps most beautiful—faces, but Brooke Shields, 24, and about to make a fresh start in movies after several years spent in Princeton, hasn't lost any of her appeal. The star of such films as *Pretty Baby*, *The Blue Lagoon* and *Endless Love* has recently made a comeback with an independently produced feature titled *Backstreet Dreams*, in which she plays a physical therapist who helps a smalltime hood come to terms with his autistic son. And then, of course, there's *Brenda Starr*, co-starring Timothy Dalton, which was completed four years ago and is yet to be released.

Shields, however, remains a believer in the project. She credits the role of the comic-strip investigative reporter created by Dale Messick with having helped her change her entire outlook on acting. "Acting used to be pleasurable because it was *fun*; it was like toying with the question, 'Who am I going to be today?' Now, it's not really fun anymore in the same sense. But it's more fulfilling and rewarding, because I feel that there are many different facets to my personality that I might never get to actualize at all if I didn't have film to do it in.

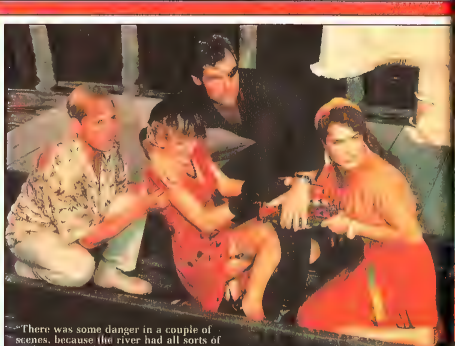
"When I did *Brenda Starr*," she continues, "I was completely the character, because I lived with her for so many years, and have been fascinated by her—she's still in the *Chicago Tribune*, although they make her too modern for my taste: She eats granola and uses a Lifecycle. When I was playing her, I bought a different wardrobe and wore different makeup—I was completely Brenda the whole time, which was great. You see, I identify much more with my characters now than I ever did before—so much so that I can't leave the set and not take home something. I used to think that that was such an 'actor' thing to do. I used to say, 'Oh, please! What do you mean she has the accent when she's home?' or, 'Why is she in such a bad mood?' Well, because she's doing a real serious scene! When I was doing *Endless Love*, I was so depressed, and I never realized why—because most of the character's life was depressing. You're a little bit in a time warp, because you sometimes don't know if it's the character feeling something or you yourself. It's not always fun."

In *Brenda Starr*, directed by Robert Ellis Miller and set in 1947, the heroine leaps to life before the disbelieving eyes of her artist, Mike Randall (Tony Peck) and embarks on adventures of her own making. Randall then writes himself into the cartoon in order to save his job. Brenda's editor at *The Flash*, the hard-boiled Livwright (Charles Durning), wants her to pursue a story "bigger than the atomic bomb," about an ex-Nazi scientist (Henry Gibson) who disappeared into the South American jungle with a secret formula for a cheap fuel that could send man into space.

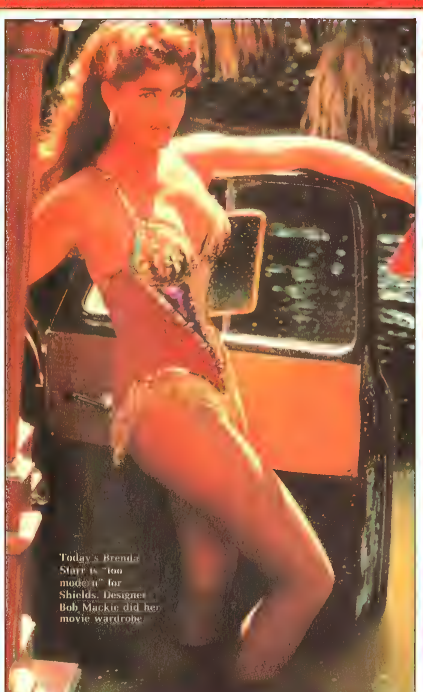
To find the man, Brenda must confront her arch-rival, Libby Lipps (Diana Scarwid), and two bumbling Russian spies (Jeffrey Tambor and June Gable). She's rescued by a handsome mystery man with an eyepatch, Basil St. John (Timothy Dalton), who depends on a serum from a black orchid to stay sane. He proves to be Brenda's guardian angel, just as Randall, who has fallen for her, turns out to be a worthy collaborator (even if he does panic on occasion). And then, of course, there are piranhas, crocodiles, kidnappings and a plethora of hair-raising adventures that Brenda can't help but survive.

"Brenda has got such class and such style!" enthuses Shields. "She's intelligent, funny. She picks a lock

In endless peril, Brenda finds herself captured by Russian spies.



"There was some danger in a couple of scenes, because the river had all sorts of snakes," says Shields.



Today's Brenda Starr is "too modern" for Shields. Designer Bob Mackie did her movie wardrobe

For 50 years, Brenda Starr has been an American comic strip heroine, yet she still doesn't look a day over 25.

Art: Ramona Fradon

"Brenda has such class and style!" exclaims Shields. "She's intelligent and funny."

Brenda Starr Film. Copyright 1987, 1989 New World Pictures

with a nail file and notices that her nails are a little chipped, so she files her nails and then continues to pick the lock. At one point, she steps over dead bodies and says, 'Excuse me.' And in another scene, she's in surgery and then you see her in her hospital bed, with peach-color nail polish and peach pajamas and a full closet—but that's the world they operate in, and she's completely believable within the context of a comic-strip world. What I like about Brenda is that she's not afraid to be feminine and yet has such guts. She challenges herself all the time and never loses her sense of humor. And she's physically strong!"

According to the actress, the greatest challenge doing the part was "accepting a completely irrational world—I mean, riding an alligator, you know?—as reality. That was the biggest challenge for most people. I never laughed at it, I only laughed within its context, because it's not tongue-in-cheek humor. It's not as if we were making fun of anything."

Shields did many of the stunts herself. "It was very physical," she explains. "I did a lot of the swimming, the trapeze act [in a circus, where Brenda is kidnapped], I rode the alligator—it was a mechanical one, real slippery! There was some danger in a couple of the scenes we did in the water, because that river had all kinds of snakes in it. In one, the director had told a stuntman to come up from behind me and push my head underwater, but he didn't tell me that he was going to do it, so I was screaming and I had my mouth open, and suddenly, he came from behind and pushed me down and I swallowed all this water. I started to fight because he wasn't

Brenda Starr Characters Copyright 1990 Tribune Media Services

All Brenda Starr Photos Courtesy Dan Yakir

"What I like about Brenda," admits Shields, "is that she's not afraid to be feminine and yet has such guts."

Starr Fantasies

The director of such movies as the comedy *Reuben, Reuben* and the drama *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, and, most recently, *Bed and Board*, tried his hand at making an escapist fantasy—his first—with *Brenda Starr*. "I found that very challenging and I'm glad we pulled it off," he states. The movie, which was shot around the St. Johns River, outside of Jacksonville, Florida (posing as the Amazon), and briefly in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, has not been released theatrically so far because "it was in litigation over the video rights," says Miller. "It was locked up in judges' chambers." Now that the dispute has been resolved, the movie's distributor, New World Pictures, has gone through a management shake-up, being sold and re-sold. The new owner of the movie's rights may try to save whatever theatrical chances the picture has left and get it released. After all, Robert Ellis Miller says its presentation at the Cannes and Taormina Film Festivals elicited positive reactions and a sneak preview of *Brenda Starr* in New York "had a great audience response."

—Dan Yakir

letting go of me, and I had my dress on and my shoes. I really panicked! When I came up, I started to cry, but I got over it."

Aside from this incident, the actress bears no ill feelings toward her director. Nor, in fact, did she require much direction. This may be due in part to the rehearsal period they enjoyed prior to the shoot's beginning, a luxury not often available to low-budget projects. "We all were such characters and so completely focused on what we were doing," she recalls, "that he hardly had any suggestions to give us. We would just go in there roaring and ready for it and he would just say, 'Great! That's terrific, next scene!' "

Of Timothy Dalton, who sweeps her off her feet and romances her in style, Shields has fond memories. She only laments she didn't get to know him better. "Timothy's very much the mystery man, which is also the part he plays in the movie," she explains. "I had one long conversation with him on a boat going home. He's a thinker who likes to look at things from a very mental sort of standpoint, and he always retains a certain composure about him, which maybe he was doing just for the part. He was very nice to everybody and didn't pull an attitude of any kind. But I can't say I *know* him."

Shields tends to be hard on herself when judging her performances, not the least because "show business is very approval-oriented, and when anything falls short of that, in your mind, you're a failure. I'm still very much like that, but I'm starting to recognize that my own approval is not only harder but it's so much more valuable. When I went to Princeton, I felt I became much stronger intellectually, not because I learned x, y and z in whatever class, but because I learned how to formulate my own ideas. I had to have faith in my own opinions, and to realize that there's so much more for me to learn."

But Brooke Shields is pleased with *Brenda Starr*, armed as she is with the new notion that "my work is my life. It didn't use to be but it is now. I am so much more alive and happy and content when I'm making a film than when I'm not. It's scary. I don't think that's really healthy; your life shouldn't be dictated by your work, no matter what your work is. You should have something that's really just your own. Now, I have to try to find that feeling outside of movies, too."

Butterworth

(continued from page 28)

Simpsons spots on *The Fracey Ullman Show*. They were contracted to do *The Simpsons* as a 30-minute TV series, but they had *never* done a series.

"Gabor had a small studio on Seward Street, in what used to be the old Bob Clampett studio," he reports. "I came in and worked with Margot Pipkin, the show's producer, and basically set up the whole procedure of doing series animation. They were going to have to send the animation overseas, just because of the incredible volume of it, 13 half-hours, for a small studio that had never done more than a few commercials."

Butterworth directed three episodes: "Some Enchanted Evening," about the babysitter thief; "The Tell-Tale Head," where Bart saws off the head of a statue of the city's founder; and "There's No Disgrace Like Home," where the Simpsons electrocute each other at a family therapy clinic.

However, he found that *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening *intentionally* wanted limited animation.

"Matt's concept is to have that animation very limited," Butterworth notes. "I was trying to go for more full animation. More full and more wacky, more theatrical. Matt's style is very, oh, minimalist, I suppose. And it works. It works for what he's trying to do.

"The problem I had working on *The Simpsons* is that *The Simpsons* is a writer's show. It's *not* an animator's show; it's really a situation comedy that happens to be animated. Matt is a brilliant satirist, but I don't think he's a filmmaker. He doesn't really take advantage of the potential of the animation medium. Especially compared to working with Ralph, where you had total freedom, here was a situation where the style is narrowly defined. Matt has already figured out these characters in his own mind and in his own style, and they work within a narrow stylistic confine. Which is great—for Matt.

"It's a wonderful show. But we just didn't see eye-to-eye about many different things. So, when [producer] Tom Rugger called me to come to *Tiny Toons*, I said, 'Great!' I had always wanted to work on Warner Bros. stuff ever since I was a kid.

"The thing about *Tiny Toons* is that I had an opportunity to work with some of the real top people in the business, like Steven Spielberg. Steven *is* a real filmmaker. He loves cartoons."

Working with Spielberg is "hectic," the animator remarks. "Steven thinks in scenes; he thinks in visuals. Sometimes, he'll look at a storyboard and throw out the original script and just invent something, simply because it's really visual. He would start talking and get really excited and would go off into this whole other realm, this whole other hilarious cartoon. It's pure instinctual filmmaking, which is exciting. It's great working with him."

Tiny Toon Adventures also provided Butterworth an opportunity to work with Maurice Noble again, on "Pluck Dodgers."

"He was happy to do it," Butterworth says. "Maurice is 80 years old, now, but he still has all of the creative juices going a hundred percent. I got the script, and it was a little bit sketchy in parts. Mike Kazaleh came in and the three of us put together this story that had something to do with the original script, but had more to do with the concepts that Maurice was coming up with. It's going to be one of the better cartoons in the series. At least, I hope so."

Other Butterworth *Tiny Toons* have Buster and Babs Bunny reuniting whales in "Whale's Tales," and rescuing Bugs Bunny from a jealous elephant in "Who Bopped Bugs Bunny?" (with Jonathan Winters voicing Stanley the elephant).

Butterworth defines his directing style as "idiosyncratic," inspired by Warners directors Bob Clampett, Frank Tashlin, Chuck Jones and Tex Avery, as well as Osamu Tezuka and Hayao Miyazaki of Japan, and Jay Ward. He also counts live-action influences from Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles and John Ford. "You get ideas wherever they are," he adds.

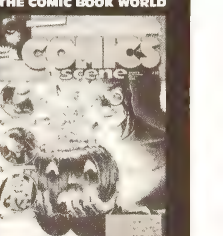
On *Tiny Toons*, he says, "We're trying to do the style that made Warner Bros. famous, following in the same tradition of trying to get a laugh whenever you can. *Anything* for a laugh. Push the expressions of the characters. Exaggerate them.

"One of my theories about humor is that nothing is funny by itself out of context. Someone slipping on a banana peel and falling and breaking their leg isn't funny. But if you can think of an *attitude* that's funny, and communicate that to the audience as a director, you'll make people laugh.

"Right now, I'm having fun doing funny cartoons," Kent Butterworth admits. "Personally, I think it's harder to make a funny cartoon than it is to make a serious cartoon. It's hard to make people laugh. You try something and if it doesn't work, then you're not funny. If you want to make a comedy, you had better make people laugh.

"Like in *G.I. Joe*—if you're in doubt, blow it up."

INSIDE
THE COMIC BOOK WORLD



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Swamp

(continued from page 35)

swamp's resident evil scientist and man about town. A veteran of episodic television, Chapman has been often cast as "the bad guy," most notably in his recurring role as Charley on CBS' *Falcon Crest*. Accustomed to playing the type of character viewers love to hate, Chapman relishes Arcane.

"Everyone has a bit of a dark side to their personality, that part they try to hide from everybody," he says. "In Arcane's case, he's a bit darker, more evil, a person of the night, but he does an excellent job of hiding behind this very distinguished gentleman persona." However, the previous films and the comics played little role in Chapman's development of "his" Arcane. "I haven't seen the two films, but I have read some of the comics because my son, Fabian, is into comics. He knows much more about what I'm doing than I do, and he's a bit upset about me portraying Arcane. He'll hate me, his friends will hate me, but if they do, that means Daddy's doing a good job. I hope people *hate* me; I think they will," he laughs.

"When I first auditioned for the part, I knew it was right from the start. I just saw this guy jump right out of the pages at me. As the episodes have developed, Arcane has become more foul, more dastardly. Like *Batman*, there are elements here for kids as well as adults, but much more so for an adult audience. I do play Arcane a little 'over the top,' but it's not the tongue-in-cheek role that Jack Nicholson's Joker was. When I'm in the cave, really evil, I can really play him 'up,' but out on the street, I downplay him quite a bit. When I get back to the cave, then I can get down and sleazy!" Chapman jokes. "He's really quite a lot like me. Nice when I'm away from home, and when I get back, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde!"

Jimmy Kipp, Swamp Thing's little pal, is portrayed by 10-year-old Jesse Zeigler, a TV veteran who appeared in the HBO movie *Judgment*. Rounding out the principal cast is Carrell Myers, who has guested in *Miami Vice*, *MacGyver* and *The A-Team*, as Tressa Kipp, Jimmy's single mother.

With 13 episodes "in the can," all involved are comfortable with the progress made in developing the series. And what should happen if *Swamp Thing* duplicates the kind of success *Batman* enjoyed in theaters? "We're not talking *Dick Tracy* or *Batman* here," Dick Durock says. "But maybe I *could* do a Miracle-Gro commercial!"

Fantasia

(continued from page 40)

slightly panned a few instruments and pin-pointed some pick-up instruments. When you played it through the Dolby system, it sounded like Darth Vader; it was unbelievable. We tried a few tricks that we use when mastering sound for Dolby shows to get the proper delays."

A number of Fantasound effects described in archival notes were simulated in this new release, including the distant tolling bell from far behind the audience at the end of "Night on Bald Mountain" and the movement of the chorus through the theater.

The end of the "Ave Maria" sequence was designed to be a visual impression of the forest as a Gothic cathedral. As designed, it is one immensely long 220-foot scene that was shot in the final three weeks before the film's New York opening. A special horizontal multi-plane camera was constructed to film the finale. So complicated was the scene that a single take took six days to shoot. The very first attempt was a failure since the lens was too wide, so that the camera included the lights, stands and time-lapse motions of the crew as well. A second attempt was interrupted by earthquake, and a third try was finished on the day before the premiere. The exposed film was rushed to Technicolor, and the finished scene flown to New York to be spliced into the last reel only *four hours* before the premiere. Since sound and picture were on different reels, the studio was in danger of having the finale of *Fantasia* run with the sound *only* if something had gone wrong with the last attempt.

For the 50th anniversary, *Fantasia* was scheduled to premiere in 500 theaters nationwide on October 5. The 70mm engagements will be shown with a six-track soundtrack, remixed from conductor Stokowski's original mixing notes to approximate the original Fantasound experience. The 35mm engagements will feature a soundtrack mixed to Dolby stereo with Surround. In a very few theaters, perhaps only two or three, extensive re-wiring has been done to create a Tri-Surround effect; the standard six magnetic tracks have been mixed with standard left, right and center behind the screen speaker sound, and three tracks have been reserved for left, center and right surround sound effects using the speakers in the audience. Unless you were around in 1940 for the original premiere, you've never seen or heard a *Fantasia* like this one.

Short

(continued from page 44)

forced him to start showering with the older boys, who were already into shaving and flexing their pecs. "You were tortured as a kid in that situation," he says. That incident found its way into a strip, in which Mason finds that being an "adult" is no great shakes if it means having to take a shower in front of everyone. Says Fry, "You have responsibilities and worries as an adult, but day-to-day life is much easier now."

Fry has several much younger siblings, and experienced the usual pangs of sibling rivalry, a subject that comes up frequently in *When I Was Short*. Mason's baby sister is Kathleen, a.k.a. his parents' "bundle of joy." "But I knew her by her real name," he says, "KATZILLA, Destroyer of Worlds! Mine in particular."

Vasilovich, meanwhile, grew up in Oak Park, IL. "Our backyard was a giant swamp with fields and weeds; my younger brother and I were adventurous. We got into all kinds of mischief. It was healthy for us."

He always drew, and in addition had a talent for percussion and played in rock bands, "something to fall back on" as his grandmother used to tell him. So, it must have been fun to draw the strip where Mason and a friend puzzle endlessly over song lyrics. "In my youth, I suffered under the delusion that pop music lyrics actually meant something," comments the narrator, while Mason and his pal wonder, "Paul's the Walrus?" "No, John Lennon's the Walrus!" "Who's the Eggman?" In the next panel, the narrator says, "It wasn't till I was older and in my own band that I realized the full truth." "What rhymes with 'caring'?" Mason asks. "Herring?" suggests his friend.

As an adult, Vasilovich gets to design things for kids, courtesy of his job as an Imagineer. He's the art director and concept person for Tokyo Disneyland's Splash Mountain.

So childhood isn't all that far behind either Fry or Guy. In fact, Fry has a small fry of his own, a two-year-old named Sarah, who became a model for a strip about Mason's baby sister, who seems to absorb food like an amoeba.

And sometimes, Fry has a Proustian experience. Marcel Proust wrote about how the taste of a certain cookie could bring childhood memories rushing back. Michael Fry is not quite so literary: "Sometimes you catch a smell, and it takes you back to second grade," he says. "And you feel bad all over again."

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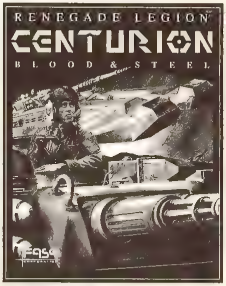

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Kurtzman

(continued from page 48)

stances as he struck out on his own. He created three new humor magazines: *Trump* (which lasted two issues), followed by *Humbug* and *Help!* Although the quality of all three was very high, Kurtzman found out his business skills weren't as developed as those of Gaines.

"Bill Gaines is a very interesting man. He was paternalistic; if you worked with Bill, he took you under his wing and took care of you. The outstanding quality of Bill Gaines and EC, as opposed to the outside world, was total security. The outside world is much more dangerous and much more challenging. I think I was more creative when I got out of *Mad* in the sense that I left the format behind me and started doing other formats."

After *Help!* folded in 1965, Kurtzman and Elder kept busy doing *Little Annie Fanny* for Hugh Hefner.

"*Annie Fanny* was originally inspired by, of all things, Voltaire's *Candide*. We did a feature in *Help!* called 'Goodman Beaver.' It was inspired by the idea of having a wide-eyed innocent go through life and suffer all the slings and arrows. We would contrast his innocence to the world's evil," he explains.

"We ran this feature for several stanzas, and somewhere along the way, I took it up to Hefner and said, 'I would like to change the guy into a girl to make it fit *Playboy*.' He liked it, and we were in business."

Annie, who always managed to have her clothes torn off at some point in each adventure, proved to be Kurtzman's mainstay for many years, though he was involved in other projects as well. In the early '70s, he did some work for *Sesame Street* (which animated some of his material), and in the '80s, helped to produce a pair of paperbacks called *Nuts*. And he continues to teach at New York's School of Visual Arts.

Today, Kurtzman says he has little interest in the magazine that brought him his initial fame.

"There's a very emotional gulf between me and *Mad*. I literally avoid reading it or looking at it, because I just can't bring myself to do it. So, I don't really have a good opinion. They've created a stable formula that works."

Instead, the legendary cartoonist prefers to look to the future, and plans to keep on teaching. Will there be more *Strange Adventures*?

"Who knows? Maybe..." he smiles enigmatically.

For Harvey Kurtzman, the strangeness may not be over...

Hollywood

(continued from page 52)

offers to write TV shows that I don't want to—and if I do, I'll collaborate with a whole bunch of people and what gets on the air might be one-tenth Mark's. I'm working on a TV show now that has six story editors, eight producers—*plus* the actors all have opinions. It's a group effort; that's fine, there's nothing wrong with playing football and being proud that the whole team wins. But there are times when you want to play tennis and win by yourself. I happen to like writing comics: I've done it since I was 17. I wrote ducks and pigs for a long time, then I wrote *Tarzan* and *Scooby Doo*, almost every kind of comic book there is.

"The money will never be as good, you'll never reach as wide an audience, but you can't beat the control and the personal feeling," he continues. "As a writer, I've found that if you just take the jobs that offer the most money, you wind up as a very unhappy person, and I have friends who prove that."

A future TV project for Evanier may be adapting his Eclipse comics series, *DNAgents*, for the small screen. It has been optioned several times and Evanier says the project is still active. "Co-creator Will Meugniot and I are dickering with a TV company that wants to hawk *DNAgents* as an hour-long 8 p.m. series. Another company wants to do *Crossfire*. We're making a lot of money off options. We haven't done more with it because Will and I are both working so steadily in TV that we don't have the time to do them—and we decided that we wouldn't do *DNAgents* for television unless we were heavily involved. We'd rather not sell it to other hands.

"We *are* doing a new *DNAgents* graphic novel sometime this year—if Will ever finds the time to do it between high-paying TV jobs."

Evanier has a history of working on projects that are a touch offbeat: *Crossfire*, *Blackhawk*, *Groo* and now *Hollywood Superstars*. He says that's just because he looks for the things he can do better than anyone else. "Sometimes when you're doing comic books, you have to look at what you can offer that somebody else can't. There's a zillion guys out there who can write barbarians better than me and hundreds and hundreds of people writing alienated superhero stories, and I don't pretend that I can do that better or any different," Mark Evanier says. "I happen to have an expertise in show business and Hollywood; I think I have a flair for writing people who are believable human beings."

Owlhoots

(continued from page 56)

case, they would find at least as much nourishment from *Kings in Disguise* or *Owlhoots*," he remarks.

Kings in Disguise was Vance's first comic book work, though it actually began as a play. One of his friends, frequent FANGORIA contributor John Wooley, mentioned that *Kings* would make a good comic book, so Vance sent off proposals and decided to go with Kitchen Sink. Now, he says that he enjoys working in the comics medium so much that he intends to continue, especially with a sequel to *Kings*. Still, most of his energies are being taken up by *Owlhoots*. The first issue of the quarterly series has already hit the stands, but Vance says the latter-day action really picks up in issue #3.

"The third issue is when they actually begin filming. They'll pick up the last couple of people they need to get this project underway. We've basically been establishing the atmosphere and the characters in the first two issues—the cameras start rolling in the third issue, and that's when we get an inkling of some of the problems these guys are facing. Up to this point, it has been character dynamics—there has been a little bit of shoot-em-up, because that's what you have to do when guys carry guns on their hips, but now, we get into the conflict within the 1914 story, as opposed to the conflicts in the flashbacks. In the first two issues, the flashbacks carry most of the action.

"The flashbacks are in chronological order," Vance says, "and we see how these people came together to begin with, what their relationships were, and what they did to settle this country where people were shooting each other up. This *isn't* a story about a bunch of people shooting each other. There are more problems with people going crazy sitting out by themselves in the middle of nowhere than there are guys who decide to ride in and shoot the sheriff because he's the top gun—that *never* happened.

"And there'll be nobody facing each other off down the street like in a B movie, because that never happened—unless they were really drunk or crazy. When lawmen back then killed someone, they ambushed them, because they were smart—if they hadn't ambushed them, they probably would have been killed. So, it's *not* that kind of heroics. The fast draw was perfected for the movies," Jim Vance says, adding with a chuckle, "it was the shooting from behind the bushes that was perfected in real life!"

COMICS screen

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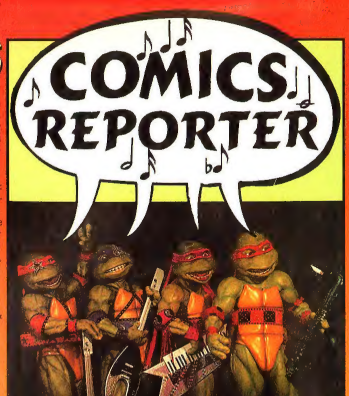


New Turtles on the Block

"Kids are into rock and roll, and kids are certainly into the Turtles, so we married the two things," explains Mark Freedman, head of the Ninjas' merchandising empire Surge Licensing, of this fab four's latest venture—the Coming Out of Their Shells Tour. "It's really a rock and roll concert for kids with a story behind it. Shredder is in it, Be-Bop and Rocksteady and there are also some new characters," he adds. Produced by Bob Bejan with Steven E. Leber and sponsored by, who else, Pizza Hut, the tour, which got its kick-off last month at New York's Radio City Music Hall, will eventually take the amphibians through 40 U.S. cities by its end in summer '91. Look for the soundtrack album with such hits as "Pizza Power."

These characters are being developed for other media. All projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk (*) have changed status since last listing. Not everything listed will ultimately be made. Abbreviations: S=script; D=director; P=producer. **Attn. all pros:** Clarifications & other info to be added to this list are cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 9/12/90).

* **The Addams Family.** Film. Orion. S: Caroline Thompson & LWilson. Morticia: Anjelica Huston. To film November.

The Adventures of Pico & Columbus. Animated feature. Bavaria Film. D: Phil Nibbelink. FX: Scott Santoro.

The Airtight Garage. Animated. S: Randy Lofficier.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

* **An American Tail.** Sequel. Due spring '91. TV series may follow. HB.

* **Annie.** Film sequel. D: Lewis Gilbert. Musical *Annie II* may open this fall.

Antiskin. Film.

Archie. Film. S: Nora & Delia Ephron. WBros. D: Joel Schumacher.

Arzach: Film of Moebius hero. P: Kirk Thatcher.

The Avengers. Film. John Steed. S: Sam Hamm.

Babar. HBO. Nelvana.

Batman II: S: Sam Hamm.

Beetle Bailey. Film.

* **Beetlejuice.** Animated series on ABC & video. Film sequel. S: Warren Skaaren.

Blackhawk. Film. Amblin. S: Dan Aykroyd.

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

Blondie. Film musical. Disney. S: Alfred Uhry. P: Francine LeFrak. Dean Young. May film spring.

James Bond. Animated series, *Adventures of James Bond Jr.* Premieres fall '91.

Betty Boop. Animated *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery.* CBS. Film. D: Richard Fleischer.

Brenda Starr, Reporter. Film. (see article)

* **Bugs Bunny.** *Tiny Toon Adventures.* (see article)

* **Bullwinkle.** *Boris & Natasha* delayed by MCEG financial troubles.

* **Captain America.** Film. May go direct to video.Arena show tour w/ Spider-Man opens spring '91.

Captain Planet. Animated series. DIC.

Cathy. Animated TV specials on CBS.

Charlie Chan. Film. Chan: B.D. Wong. D: Fred Levinson. P: Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde.

Chicken Man. Animated spoof series. Calico.

Chip & Dale. *Rescue Rangers* airing. Film due '91.

City of Darkness. Film. S: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. Hero & villain battle in real world. P: Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber. Columbia.

Conan. Film.

Cracked. Superhero parody.

Daredevil. TV series. (?) P: Shelley Duvall. FBC.

Deathlok. Film.

* **Delta Tenn.** Dead.

Dick Tracy. Sequel(?).

Dinosaurs for Hire. Film. S: Richard Finney & James Bonny. 20th Fox. Creature FX: Jim Henson's Creature Shop.

DNAgents. Film. UA.

Dr. Strange. Film. Zoetrope. D: Alex Cox. P: FF Coppola.

Droopy. With son Dribble in *Tom & Jerry Kids.* HB.

Evangeline. Film. Funnybook Films.

Family Dog. Mid-season animated series. CBS. P: Steven Spielberg, Tim Burton.

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. P: Bernd Eichinger.

* **The Far Side.** Animated TV series.

Felix the Cat. Animated film. Produced, still no release.

Fish Police. Animated series. HB. CBS. Film. S: Gary K. Wolf. P: Michael Uslan, Ben Melniker.

The Flash. CBS TV series. WBros. (see article)

The Flintstones. Film. Fred: John Goodman. Universal & Amblin. April shooting?

Fu Manchu. Film. *Secret of Fu Manchu*: David Carradine.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends.*

Ghost Rider. Film. New Line.

The Green Hornet. Film. Universal.

Green Lantern. Film. P: Joel Silver. Being written.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

He-Man. *New Adventures of He-Man* due fall. LBS Comm.

* **Heroes for Hire.** Film. Still alive, per Marvel.

Honkytonk Sue. Film.

Human Target. TV movie pilot. ABC. Stars Rick Springfield, Clarence Clemons.

* **The Incredible Hulk.** Fourth TV movie still possible.

Inspector Gadget. Live TV series. DIC. Family Channel.

Iron Man. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. Universal.

The Jetsons. New, live-action film. Universal.

Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film.

Judge Dredd. Film. S: Howard Chaykin & John Moore. P: Charles Lippincott.

Justice League. TV movie pilot. NBC. Lorimar.

Kaanga. Film. S: Geoff Edwards (also D). Sam Bernard. P: Lee Caplin, Blake Edwards, Tony Adams.

Lt. Blueberry. Film.

Lt. Hubner. TV. P: Max & Micheline Keller.

Little Nemo in Slumberland. Animated film. TMS Ent. Due fall. Songs: Richard & Robert Sherman.

The Lone Ranger. Syndicated TV series. Separate film. D: John Landis. Universal.

* **Lone Wolf & Cub.** Film. D: John Bruno. P: Ed Pressman. S: Bill Wisher.

Lucky Luke. TV series. Terence Hill, star. Silvio Berlusconi Comm.

MacDoodle Street. Film. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* strip.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. S/P: Larry Wilson. P: Walter Hill. Carolco.

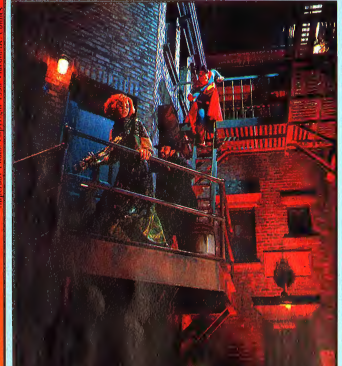
Mandrake. Film. Italy's Pentafilm.

The Mask. Film. New Line.

Mickey Mouse. Animated featurette "The Prince & the Pauper" due out fall '90.

Mr. Jigsaw. Animated. Rankin-Bass.

Mr. Magoo. Film. P: Steven Tisch. Also animated film with niece, Megan Magoo.



Superboy Photo: Copyright 1990 Victor/DC Comics

Superboy (Gerard Christopher) embarks on a third season of fighting criminals (like villainous David Tinkhan, pictured here) and rescuing Lana Lang (Stacy Haiduk) in the half-hour syndicated series. This year, college student Clark Kent relocates to Capitol City to intern at the Bureau for Extra-Normal Matters, a rather specialized branch of the Department of the Interior.

Firing Up "The Rocketeer"

It has taken five years, two scripts, six rewrites and two directors, but *The Rocketeer* is finally poised to make that all-important leap from comic page to silver screen. Production on the film adaptation of Dave Stevens' airborne adventure was slated for a September 4 start. Bill Campbell stars.

The Rocketeer, directed by Joe (*Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*) Johnston, is set in the same pre-war late '30s period that Dave Stevens depicted in the Rocketeer's comic-book exploits. The story, based on his first adventure, focuses on stunt pilot Cliff Secord who stumbles upon a rocket pack designed by Howard Hughes. The pack is subsequently stolen by a group of gangsters who are in the employ of an English actor who is, in fact, a Nazi spy.

"The inspiration for the script was drawn directly from the comic," says writer Danny Bilson. "Cliff finds this pack and is determined to exploit it. But when it is stolen and he discovers the true meaning behind it, the circumstances change his character and propel him into becoming a hero in spite of himself."

Paul De Meo says the biggest challenge in writing *The Rocketeer* script was coming up with a good story.

"What's great about *The Rocketeer* is the art, the atmosphere and the tone. It was never really the story. So, when Danny and I got together with Dave five years ago, the major challenge was coming up with a good story that was faithful to the book's feeling. The second challenge was dealing with a studio that had lots of notes and opinions and which forced us to rewrite, rewrite, rewrite."

Along the rewrite trail, director Bill (*Harry and the Hendersons*) Dear (who discussed this project in CS #2) fell by the wayside.

"We had developed the story with Bill [who still has a story credit on the script]," says Bilson, "but between the rewrites and the ongoing delays and budget questions, it had gotten to the point where Disney had not greenlighted the project and Bill had received another offer. So, he took the other show."

Neither writer is prone to discussing the projected budget on *The Rocketeer*, but De Meo admits, "This is going to be a very expensive film. We've written a very big film. There are tons of flying gags, a zeppelin, a lot of racing planes. How much this is going to cost is anybody's guess at this point. But big is *definitely* the operative word."

—*Marc Shapiro*

Mr. X. Film. P: Jim Cash & Jack Epps Jr.

My Secret Identity. Syndicated sitcom.

Nancy. Film. P: Peter Muller.

Negative Man. Bob Kane hero. Live series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. S: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Film. P: Bruce Sherlock, Peter Sjoquist, John Torv, Rodney Price. S: Ken Shadie. *Phantom* creator Lee Falk, consultant.

* **Plastic Man.** Film. New script underway. WB/Amblin.

Prince Valiant. Animated.

The Prowler. Film. Funnybook Films.

* **The Punisher.** Film. On video this fall from IVE.

Radio Boy. Animated. Rankin-Bass.

Reid Fleming. Film. Jim Belushi. S: creator David Boswell. P: Matt Weisman, Joseph Loeb II.

Richie Rich. Film. RR: Fred Savage. P: Joel Silver, John Davis. Seeks studio.

* **RoboCop.** Second sequel. S: Frank Miller & Fred Dekker (D).

* **The Rocketeer.** Film. Disney. Rocketeer: Bill Campbell. D: Joe Johnston. S: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo. P: Lawrence & Charles Gordon, Lloyd Levin. Now shooting. (see item)

* **Rover Dangerfield.** Animated film. Rodney Dangerfield.

* **The Saint.** Film. P: Robert Evans. Paramount.

* **Scooby Doo.** Film. W Bros. **Secret Agent X-9.** Animated film.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. TV revival projected.

* **Sgt. Rock.** Film. Rock: Bruce Willis. P: Joel Silver, Bob Zemeckis. S: Jeff Boam. To film spring '91.

The Shadow. Film. S: David Koepp. Universal.

* **The She-Hulk.** Film. S/D: Larry Cohen.

* **The Silver Surfer.** Film.

* **The Simpsons.** Animated series. FBC.

* **Spider-Man.** Film. Arena show w/ Cap A opens spring '91. Separate stage musical. S & lyrics: Barry Harman. Music: Keith Herrmann. EXP: Stan Lee, David J. Nash, Joseph Calamari.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

Suicide Squad. CBS TV pilot. Lorimar.

* **Superboy.** Syndicated TV series airing. New cast members: Peter Fernandez, Robert Levine. (see item)

* **Superman.** *Superman V.* Being written. S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. *May* lense in FL.

* **Swamp Thing.** Half-hour TV series. USA. (see article)

Tales from the Crypt. HBO series.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** Animated series in syndication & on CBS. First live-action film out on video from Live Ent. in October. Sequel shooting. Spring release. D: Michael Pressman. New Line. Live stage show now touring. (see item)

Terry & the Pirates. Film. S: Jules Feiffer. P: Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde. EXP: Stan Weston.

Thor. Film. Stonebridge.

Time Beavers. Animated TV series. Kushner-Locke.

Tin-Tin. Animated series pilot. Nelvana.

Tom & Jerry. Animated 13-show *Tom & Jerry Kids*. FBC.

Trouble with Girls. Film. 20th Fox & Funnybook Films. S: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones. P: MPepler, NTabachnick.

* **Two-Fisted Tales.** Half-hour anthology. FBC.

Valentina. 13-episode half-hour TV series. Stars Dementra Hampton. Reteitalia.

Vampirella. Films. S/D: Jim Wynorski.

V for Vendetta. Film. WB.

WARP. Film. S/P: Mark Victor & Michael Grais.

Watchmen. Film. S: Sam Hamm. P: Joel Silver. D: Terry Gilliam. Seeks studio.

Wizard of Id. Film. S: Steven de Souza. Dana Olsen. D: David & Jerry Zucker.

Wolverine. Film.

Wonder Woman. TV series.

The X-Men. Animated five-episode mini-series for FBC. Marvel Productions.

Zen, Intergalactic Ninja. Film. Animated series.

Zippy-vision. Film. S: Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin.

Zorro. Half-hour TV series airs on Family Channel. Zorro: Duncan Regehr. Henry Darrow replaces Efrem Zimbalist Jr. as Zorro's dad.

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